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AGON AND ALKIBIADES: AN INTERPRETATION OF PLATO'S FIRST ALKIBIADES

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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submitted by Heidi Studer

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

For centuries the First Alkibiades was respected as a major dialogue in the Platonic corpus. It was considered by the Academy to be the proper introduction to the study of Plato's dialogues, and actually formed the core of the serious beginner's study of philosophy. Various ancient critics have written major commentaries upon the dialogue (most of which have subsequently been lost). In short, it was looked upon as a most important work by those arguably in the best position to know.

In comparatively recent times the First Alkibiades has lost its status. Some leading Platonic scholars judge it to be spurious, and as a result it is seldom read as seriously as several other Platonic dialogues. This thesis attempts a critical examination of the dialogue with an eye towards deciding which judgement of it, the ancient or the modern, ought to be accepted.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE READING OF THE FIRST ALKIBIADES

A. Alkibiades and Socrates

Overpowering curiosity may be aroused in a reader upon his noticing how two apparently opposite men, Socrates and Alkibiades, are drawn to each other's conversation and company. Such seems to be the effect achieved by the First Alkibiades, a dialogic representation of the beginning of their association.[1] Of all the people named in the titles of Platonic dialogues, Alkibiades was probably the most famous. It seems reasonable to assume that one's appreciation of the dialogue would be enhanced by knowing as much about the historical Alkibiades as would the typical educated Athenian reader. Accordingly, this examination of the dialogue will commence by recounting the major events of Alkibiades' career, on the premise that such a reminder may enrich a philosophic understanding of the First Alkibiades.[2]

The historical Alkibiades was born to Kleinias and Deinomakhe. Although the precise date of his birth remains unknown (cf. 121d), it was most surely before 450 B.C. His father, Kleinias, was one of the wealthy men in Athens, financially capable of furnishing and outfitting a trireme in wartime. Of Deinomakhe we know nothing save that she was well born.[3] As young children Alkibiades and his brother, Kleinias, lost their father in battle and were made wards of their uncle, the renowned Perikles.[4] He is recognized by posterity as one of the greatest statesmen of Greece. Athens prospered during his lengthy rule in office and flourished to such an extent that the "Golden Age of Greece" is also called the "Age of

Perikles." When Alkibiades came under his care, Perikles held the highest office in Athens and governed almost continuously until his death which occurred shortly after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

At an early age Alkibiades was distinguished for his striking beauty and his multi-faceted excellence. He desired to be triumphant in all he undertook and generally was so. In games and sport with other boys he is said to have taken a lion's share of victories. There are no portraits of Alkibiades in existence from which one might judge his looks, but it is believed that he served his contemporaries as the standard artistic model for representations of the gods. No doubt partly because of his appearance and demeanor, he strongly influenced his boyhood companions. For example, it was rumored that Alkibiades was averse to the flute because it prevented the player from singing, as well as disfiguring his face. Refusing to take lessons, he referred to Athenian deities as exemplars, calling upon Athena and Apollon who had shown disdain for the flute and for flautists. Within a short time flute-playing had ceased to be regarded as a standard part of the curriculum for a gentleman's education.[5] Alkibiades was most surely the talk of the town among the young men and it is scarcely a wonder that tales of his youthful escapades abound.[6]

Pursued by many lovers, he for the most part scorned such attentions. On one occasion Anytos,[7] who was infatuated with Alkibiades, invited him to a dinner party. Instead, Alkibiades went drinking with some of his friends. During the evening he collected his servants and bade them interrupt Anytos' supper and remove half of the golden cups and silver ornaments from the table. Alkibiades did not even bother to enter. The other guests grumbled about this hybristic treatment of

Anytos, who responded that on the contrary Alkibiades had been moderate and kind in leaving half when he might have absconded with all. Alkibiades certainly seems to have enjoyed an extraordinary sway over some of his admirers.[8]

Alkibiades sought to enter Athenian politics as soon as he became eligible and at about that time he first met Socrates. The First Alkibiades is a dramatic representation of what might have happened at that fateful meeting.[9] Fateful it was indeed, for the incalculable richness of the material it has provided for later thought as well as for the lives of the two men. By his own admission,[10] Alkibiades felt that his feeling shame could be occasioned only by Socrates. Though it caused him discomfort, Alkibiades nevertheless chronically returned to Socrates.[11] With what was for him an unusual result, Alkibiades a number of times schemed unsuccessfully to have Socrates submit to his charms. Until he left Athens, Alkibiades was continually in and out of the company of Socrates and the two were popularly understood to be closely connected.

They fought side-by-side as well. While they were tent-mates at the engagement at Potidaia, Socrates had occasion to save Alkibiades' life. The generals were about to confer on him a prize for his valor but he insisted it be awarded to Alkibiades.[12] This occurred near the beginning of their friendship, at the start of the Peloponnesian War. Later, during the Athenian defeat at the battle of Delion, Alkibiades repaid him in kind. In the role of cavalryman, he defended Socrates who was on foot.[13] Shortly thereafter, Alkibiades charged forward into politics, campaigns he mounted invariably meeting with success. Elected strategos (general) in 420 B.C. on the basis of his exploits, he was one of the youngest ever to wield such high authority. Generally opposing

Nikias and the plan for peace, Alkibiades as the leader of the democrats allied Athens with various enemies of Sparta. His grandiose plans for the navy rekindled Athenian ambitions for empire which had been at best smouldering since the death of Perikles. Alkibiades' policy proposals favored the escalation of the war, and he vocally supported Athens' continuation of her position as the imperial power in the Mediterranean. His first famous plan, the Athenian alliance with Argos, is recounted in detail by Thucydides.[14] Thucydides provides an especially vivid portrait of Alkibiades and indicates that he was unexcelled, both in terms of diplomatic maneuvering and rhetorical ability.[15] By arranging for the Spartan envoys to modify their story from day to day, he managed to make Nikias look foolish in his trust of them.[16] Although Alkibiades suffered a temporary loss of command, his continuing rivalry with Nikias secured him powerful influence in Athens, which was heightened by an apparent failure of major proportions by Nikias in Thrace in 418-417 B.C.

Alkibiades' sustained opposition to Nikias prompted some of the radical democrats under Hyperbolos to petition for an ostrakismos. This kind of legal ostracism was a device intended primarily for the overturning of stalemates. With a majority of the vote an ostrakismos could be held. Citizens would then write on a potsherd the name of the one man in all of Attika they would like to see exiled. There has been famous ostracisms before this time, some of which were almost immediately regretted (e.g., Aristeides the Just, in 482 B.C.). At any rate, Hyperbolos campaigned to have Alkibiades ostracized. Meanwhile, in one of their rare moments of agreement, Alkibiades persuaded Nikias to join with him in a counter-campaign to ensure that the percentage of votes required to effect Alkibiades' exile would not be attained. They were

so successful that the result of the ostrakismos was the exile of Hyperbolos. That was Athen's last ostrakismos.[17]

Thucydides devotes two books (arguably the most beautiful of his History of the Peloponnesian War) to the Sicilian Expedition. This campaign Alkibiades instigated is considered by many to be his most noteworthy adventure, and was certainly one of the major events of the war. Alkibiades debated with Nikias and convinced the Ekklesia (assembly) to launch the expedition in 415 B.C.[18] Clearly no match for Alkibiades' rhetoric, Nikias, according to the speeches of Thucydudes, worked an effect opposite his intentions when he warned the Athenians of the expense.[19] Rather than being daunted by the magnitude of the cost of the expedition, the Athenians were eager to supply all that was necessary.[20] This enthusiasm was undoubtedly enhanced by the recent reports of the vast wealth of Sicily. Nikias, Alkibiades and Lamakhos were appointed co-commanders with full power (giving them more political authority than anyone in Athen's recent history).[21]

Immediately prior to the start of the expedition, the Hermai throughout Athens were disfigured. The deed was a sacrilege as well as a bad omen for the expedition.[22] Enemies of Alkibiades took this opportunity to link him with the act since he was already suspected of profaning the Eleusian Mysteries and of generally having a hybristic disregard for the conventional religion. He was formally charged with impiety. Alkibiades wanted to have his trial immediately, arguing it would not be good to command a battle with the charge remaining undecided.[23] His enemies, who suspected the entire military force would take Alkibiades' side, urged that the trial be postponed so as not to delay the awaiting fleet's scheduled departure. As a result they sailed

with Alkibiades' charge untried.

When the generals arrived at Rhegion, they discovered that the stories of the wealth of the place had been greatly exaggerated.[24] Nonetheless, Alkibiades and Lamakhos voted together against Nikias to remain and accomplish what they had set out to do.[25] Alkibiades thought it prudent that they first establish which of their allies actually had been secured, and to try to persuade the rest. Most imperative, he believed, was the persuasion of the Messenians.[26] The Messenians would not admit Alkibiades at first, so he sailed to Naxos and then to Katana. Naxos allied with Athens readily, but it is suspected that the Katanaians had some force used upon them.[27] Before the Athenians could address the Messenians or the Rhegians, both of whom held important geographic positions and were influential, a ship arrived to take Alkibiades back to Athens. During his absence from Athens, his enemies had worked hard to increase suspicion that he had been responsible for the sacrilege, and now, with the populace aroused against Alkibiades, they urged he be immediately recalled.[28]

Alkibiades set sail to return in his own ship, filled with his friends. At Thouri they escaped and went to the Peloponnese. Meanwhile the Athenians sentenced him to death.[29] He revealed to the Spartans his idea that Messenian support in the west was crucial to Athens. The Spartans weren't willing to trust Alkibiades given his generally anti-Spartan policies, and they particularly did not appreciate his past treatment of the Spartan envoys. In a spectacular speech, as recounted by Thucydides, Alkibiades defended himself and his conduct in leaving Athens.[30] Along with a delegation of Korinthians and Syrakusans, Alkibiades argued for Sparta's participation in the war in Sicily. He

also suggested to them that their best move against Athens was to fortify a post at Dekelia in Attika. In short, once again Alkibiades proved himself to be a master of diplomacy, knowing the right thing to say at any given time, even among sworn enemies. The Spartans welcomed Alkibiades.[31] Because of his knowledge of Athenian affairs, they acted upon his advice about Dekelia (413 B.C.).[32] Alkibiades did further service for Sparta by inciting some Athenian allies in Asia Minor, particularly at Khios, to revolt. He also suggested to Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap of Asia Minor, that he ought to consider an alliance with Sparta.[33]

However, in 412 B.C. Alkibiades lost favor with the Spartans. His loyalty was in doubt and he was suspected of having seduced the Spartan queen; she became pregnant during a long absence of the king.[34] Alkibiades prudently moved on, this time fleeing to the Persian court of Tissaphernes where he served as an advisor to the satrap. He counselled Tissaphernes to ally neither with Sparta nor with Athens; it would be in his best interests to let them wear each other down. Tissaphernes was pleased with this advice and soon listened to Alkibiades on most matters, having, it seems, complete confidence in him. Alkibiades told him to lower the rate of pay to the Spartan navy in order to moderate their activities and ensure proper conduct. He should also economize and reduce expenditures. Alkibiades cautioned him against being too hurried in his wish for a victory.[35] Tissaphernes was so delighted with Alkibiades' counsel that he had the most beautiful park in his domain named after him and developed into a luxury resort.[36]

The Athenian fleet, in the meantime, was at Samos, and with it lay the real power of Athens. The city had been brought quite low by

the war, especially the Sicilian expedition, which left in the hands of the irresolute and superstitious Nikias turned out to be disastrous for the Athenians. Alkibiades engaged in a conspiracy to promote an oligarchic revolution in Athens, ostensibly to ensure his own acceptance there. However, when the revolution occurred, in 411 B.C., and the Council of Four Hundred was established, Alkibiades did not associate himself with it.[37] He attached himself to the fleet at Samos and relayed to them the promise of support he had exacted from Tissaphernes. The support was not forthcoming, however, but despite the sentiment among some of the Athenians at Samos that Alkibiades intended to trick them, the commanders and soldiers were confident that Athens could never rise without Alkibiades.[38] They appointed him general and re-instated him as the chief-in-command of the Athenian Navy. He sent a message to the oligarchic Council of Four Hundred in Athens telling them he would support a democratic boule of 5,000 but that the Four Hundred would have to disband. There was no immediate response.

In the meantime, with comparatively few men and ships, Alkibiades managed to deflect the Spartans from their plan to form an alliance with the Persian fleet. Alkibiades became an increasingly popular general among the men at Samos, and with his rhetorical abilities he dissuaded them from adopting policies that would likely have proven disastrous. He insisted they be more moderate, for example, in their treatment of unfriendly ambassadors, such as those from Athens. The Council of Four Hundred sent an emissary to Samos, but Alkibiades was firm in his refusal to support them.[39] This pleased the democrats, and since most of the oligarchs were by this time split into several factions, the rule of the Four Hundred fragmented of its own accord.[40] Alkibiades sent advice from

Samos as to the form of government the 5,000 should adopt,[41] but he still did not consider it the proper time for his own return.[42]

During this time Alkibiades and the Athenian fleet gained major victories, defeating the Spartans at Kynossema, at Abydos (411 B.C.), and at Kyzikos (410 B.C.).[43] Seeking to regain some control, Tissaphernes had Alkibiades arrested on one occasion when he approached in a single ship. It was a diplomatic visit, not a battle, yet Tissaphernes had him imprisoned. Within a month, however, Alkibiades and his men escaped. In order to ensure that Tissaphernes would live to regret the arrest, Alkibiades caused a story to be widely circulated to the effect that Tissaphernes had arranged the escape. Suffice it to say the Great King of Persia was not pleased.[44] Alkibiades also recovered Kalkhedonia and Byzantion for the Athenians in 408 B.C.[45]

After gathering money from various sources and assuring himself of the security of Athenian control of the Hellespont, he at last decided to return to Athens. It had been an absence of seven years. He was met with an enthusiastic reception in the Peiraeus.[46] All charges against him were dropped and the prevailing sentiment among the Athenians was that had they only trusted in his leadership, they would still be the great empire they had been.[47] With the hope that he would be able to restore to them some of their former glory, they appointed Alkibiades general with full powers, a most extraordinary command. He gained further support from the Athenians when he led the procession to Eleusis (the very mysteries of which he had earlier been suspected of blaspheming) on the overland route. Several years earlier, through fear of the Spartans at Dekelia, the procession had broken tradition and gone by sea. This restoration of tradition ensured Alkibiades political support

from the more pious sector of the public who had been hesitant about him.[48] He had so consolidated his political support by this time that such ever persons as opposed him wouldn't have dared to publicly declare their opinions.[49]

Alkibiades led a number of successful expeditions over the next year and the Athenians were elated with his command. He had never failed in a military undertaking and the men in his fleet came to regard themselves a higher class of soldier.[50] However, an occasion arose during naval actions near Notion when Alkibiades had to leave the major part of his fleet under the command of another captain while he sailed to a nearby island to levy funds. He left instructions not to engage the enemy under any circumstances, but during his absence a battle was fought nonetheless. Alkibiades hurriedly returned but arrived too late to salvage victory. Many men and ships were lost to the Spartans. Such was his habit of victory that the people of Athens suspected that he must have wanted to lose.[51] They once again revoked his citizenship.

Alkibiades left Athens for the last time in 406 B.C. and retired to a castle he had built long before. Despite his complete loss of civic status with the Athenians, his concern for them did not cease. In his last attempt to assist Athens against the Spartan fleet under Lysander, Alkibiades made a special journey at his own expense to advise the new strategoi. He cautioned them that what remained of the Athenian fleet was moored at a very inconvenient place, and that the men should be held in tighter rein given the proximity of Lysander's ships. They disregarded his advice with utter contempt (only to regret it upon their almost immediate defeat) and Alkibiades returned to his private retreat.[52] There he stayed in quiet luxury until assassinated one night in 404 B.C.[53]

The participants in the First Alkibiades, Socrates and Alkibiades, seem at first blush to be thoroughly contrasting. To start with appearances, the physical difference between the two men who meet this day could hardly be more extreme. Alkibiades, famous throughout Greece for his beauty, is face to face with Socrates who is notoriously ugly. They are each represented in a dramatic work of the period. Aristophanes refers to Alkibiades as a young lion; he is said to have described Socrates as a "stalking pelican."[54] Alkibiades is so handsome that his figure and face served as a model for sculptures of Olympian gods on high temple friezes. Socrates is referred to as being very like the popular representation of siloni and satyrs; the closest he attains to Olympian heights is Aristophanes' depiction of him hanging in a basket from the rafters of an old house.[55]

Pre-eminent among citizens for his wealth and his family, Alkibiades is speaking with a man of non-descript lineage and widely advertised poverty. Alkibiades, related to a family of great men, is the son of Kleinias and Deinomakhe, both of royal lineage. Socrates, who is the son of Sophroniskos the stone-mason and Phainarete the midwife, does not seem to have such a spectacular ancestry.

Even as a boy Alkibiades was famous for his desire to win and his ambition for power. Despite being fearful of it, people are familiar with political ambition and so believe they understand it. To them, Alkibiades seemed the paragon of the political man. But Socrates was more of a mystery to the typical Athenian. He seemed to have no concern with improving his political or economic status. Rather, he seemed preoccupied to the point of perversity with something he called 'philosophy,' literally 'love of wisdom.' Alkibiades sought political office as soon

as he became of age. He felt certain that in politics he could rise above all Athenians past and present. His combined political and military success made it possible for him to be the youngest general ever elected. Socrates, by contrast, said that he was never moved to seek office; he served only when he was required (by legal appointment). In his lifetime Socrates was considered to have been insufficiently concerned with his fellows' opinions about him, whereas from his childhood people found Alkibiades' attention to the demos remarkable - in terms either of his quickness at following their cue, or of his setting the trend.

Both men were famous for their speaking ability, but even in this they contrast dramatically. The effects of their speech were different. Alkibiades could persuade people, and so nations, to adopt his political proposals, even when he had been regarded as an enemy. Socrates' effect was far less widespread. Indeed, for most people acquainted with it, Socratic speech was suspect. People were moved by Alkibiades' rhetoric despite their knowing that that was his precise intention. It was Socrates, however, who was accused of making the weaker argument defeat the stronger, though he explicitly renounced such intentions. Alkibiades' long moving speeches persuaded many large assemblies. Socrates' style of question and answer was not nearly so popular, and convinced fewer men.

Socrates is reputed to have never been drunk, regardless of how much he had imbibed. This contrasts with the (for the most part) notoriously indulgent life of Alkibiades. He remains famous to this day for several of his drunken escapades, one of which is depicted by Plato in a famous dialogue, The Symposium.

Though both men were courageous and competent in war, Socrates never went to battle unless called upon, and distinguished himself only

during general retreats. Alkibiades was so eager for war and all its attendant glories that he even argued in the ekklesia for an Athenian escalation of the war. He was principally responsible for the initiation of the Sicilian expedition and was famous for his bravery in wanting to go ever further forward in battle. It was, instead, battles in speech for which Socrates seemed eager; perhaps it is a less easily observed brand of courage which is demanded for advance and retreat in such clashes.

Both men could accommodate their lifestyles to fit with the circumstances in which they found themselves, but as these were decidedly different, so too were their manners of adaptation. Socrates remained exclusively in Athens except when accompanying his fellow Athenians on one or two foreign wars. Alkibiades travelled from city to city, and seems to have adjusted well. He got on so remarkably well at the Persian court that the Persians thought he was one of them; and at Sparta they could not believe the stories of his love of luxury. But, despite his outward conformity with all major Athenian conventions, Socrates was still considered odd even in his home city.

In a more speculative vein, one might observe that neither Alkibiades nor Socrates are restricted because of their common Athenian citizenship, but again in quite different senses. Socrates, willing (and eager) to converse with, educate and improve citizen and non-citizen alike, rose above the polis to dispense with his need for it. Alkibiades, it seems, could not do without political or public support (as Socrates seems to have), but he too did not need Athens in particular. He could move to any polis and would be recognized as an asset to any community. Socrates didn't receive such recognition, but he did not need it. Still, Alkibiades, like Socrates, retained an allegiance to Athens until his

death and continued to perform great deeds in her service.

Despite their outwardly conventional piety (e.g., regular observance of religious festivals), Alkibiades and Socrates were both formally charged with impiety, but the manner of their alleged violations was different. Alkibiades was suspected of careless blasphemy and contemptuous disrespect, of profaning the highest of the city's religious Mysteries; Socrates was charged with worshipping other deities than those allowed, but was suspected of atheism. Though both men were convicted and sentenced to death, Alkibiades refused to present himself for trial and so was sentenced in absentia. Socrates, as we know, conducted his own defense, and, however justly or unjustly, was legally convicted and condemned. Alkibiades escaped when he had the chance and sought refuge in Sparta; Socrates refused to take advantage of a fully arranged escape from his cell in Athens. Alkibiades, a comparatively young man, lived to see his sentence subsequently withdrawn. Socrates, an old man in 399 B.C. seems to have done his best not to have his sentence reduced. His relationship with Athens had been quite constant. Old charges were easily brought to bear on new ones, for the Athenians had come to entertain a relatively stable view of him. Alkibiades suffered many reverses of status with the Athenians.

Surprised from his sleep, Alkibiades met his death fighting with assassins, surrounded by his enemies. After preparing to drink the hemlock, Socrates died peacefully, surrounded by his friends.

It seems likely that Plato expects these contrasts to be tacitly in the mind of the reader of the First Alkibiades. They heighten in various ways the excitement of this dialogue between two men whom every Athenian of their day would have seen, and known at least by reputation.

Within a generation of the supposed time of the dialogue, moreover, each of the participants would be regarded with utmost partiality. It is unlikely that even the most politically apathetic citizen would be neutral or utterly indifferent concerning either man. Not only would every Athenian (and many foreigners) know each of them, most Athenians would have strong feelings of either hatred or love for each man. The extraordinary fascination of these men makes Plato's First Alkibiades all the more inviting as a natural point at which to begin a study of political philosophy.

In the First Alkibiades, Socrates and Alkibiades, regarded by posterity as respective paragons of the philosophic life and the political life, are engaged in conversation together. As the dialogue commences, Alkibiades in particular is uncertain as to their relationship with each other. Especially interesting, however, is their implicit agreement that these matters can be clarified through their speaking with one another. The reader might first wonder why they even bother with each other; and further wonder why, if they are properly to be depicted together at all, it should be in conversation. They could be shown in a variety of situations. People often settle their differences by fighting, a challenge to a contest, or a public debate of some kind. Alkibiades and Socrates converse in private. The man identified with power and the man identified with knowledge have their showdown on the plain of speech.

The Platonic dialogue form, as will hopefully be shown in the commentary, is well suited for expressing political philosophy in that it allows precisely this confrontation. A Platonic dialogue is different from a treatise in its inclusion of drama. It is not a straightforward explication for it has particular characters who are interacting in

specific ways. It is words plus action, or speech plus deed. In a larger sense, then, dialogue implicitly depicts the relation between speech and deed or theory and practice, philosophy and politics, and reflecting on its form allows the reader to explore these matters.

In addition, wondering about the particulars of Socratic speech may shed light upon how theory relates to practice. As one attempts to discover why Socrates said what he did in the circumstances in which he did, one becomes aware of the connections between speech and action, and philosophy and politics. One is also awakened to the important position of speech as intermediary between thought and action. Speech is unlike action as has just been indicated. But speech is not like thought either. It may, for instance, have immediate consequences in action and thus demand more rigorous control. Philosophy might stand in relation to thought as politics does to action; understanding 'political philosophy' then would involve the complex connection between thought and speech, and speech and action; in other words, the subject matter appropriate to political philosophy embraces the human condition. The Platonic dialogue seems to be in the middle ground by way of its form, and it is up to the curious reader to determine what lies behind the speech, on both the side of thought and action. Hopefully, in examining the First Alkibiades these general observations will be made more concrete. A good reader will take special care to observe the actions as well as the arguments of this dialogue between the seeker of knowledge and the pursuer of power.

Traditionally, man's ability to reason has been considered the essential ground for his elevated status in the animal kingdom. Through reason, both knowledge and power are so combined as to virtually place man on an altogether higher plane of existence. Man's reason allows him

to control beasts physically much stronger than he; moreover, herds outnumber man, yet he rules them.[56]

Both knowledge and power have long attracted men recognizably superior in natural gifts. Traditionally, the highest choice a man could confront was that between the contemplative and the active life.[57] In order to understand this as the decision par excellence, one must comprehend the interconnectivity between knowledge and power as ends men seek. One must also try to ascertain the essential features of the choice. For example, power (conventionally understood) without knowledge accomplishes little even for the mighty. As Thrasymakhos was reminded, without knowledge the efforts of the strong would chance to work harm upon themselves as easily as not (Republic 339 a-e).

The very structure of the dialogue suggests that the reader attentive to dramatic detail may learn more about the relation between power and knowledge and their respective claims to rule. Alkibiades and Socrates both present arguments, and the very dynamics of the conversation (e.g., who rules in the dialogue, what means he uses whereby to secure rule, the development of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled) promise to provide material of interest to this issue.

B. Knowledge, Power and their Connection through Language

As this commentary hopes to show, the problem of the human use of language pervades the Platonic dialogue known as the First Alkibiades. Its ubiquity may indicate that one's ability to appreciate the significance of speech provides an important measure of one's understanding of the dialogue. Perhaps the point can be most effectively conveyed by simply indicating a few of the many kinds of references to speech with which it is replete. Socrates speaks directly to Alkibiades in complete

privacy, but he employs numerous conversational devices to construct circumstances other than that in which they find themselves. For example, Alkibiades is to pretend to answer to a god; Socrates feigns a dialogue with a Persian queen; and at one point the two imagine themselves in a discussion with each other in full view of the Athenian ekklesia. Socrates stresses that he never spoke to Alkibiades before, but that he will now speak at length. And Socrates emphasizes that he wants to be certain Alkibiades will listen until he finishes saying what he must say. In the course of speaking, Socrates employs both short dialogue and long monologue. Various influences on one's speaking are mentioned, including mysterious powers that prevent speech and certain matters that inherently demand to be spoken about. The two men discuss the difference between asking and answering, talking and listening. They refer to speech about music (among other arts), speech about number, and speech about letters. They are importantly concerned with public speaking, implicitly with rhetoric in all its forms. They reflect upon what an advisor to a city can speak persuasively about. They discuss the difference between persuading one and many. The two men refer to many differences germane to speaking, such as private and public speech, and conspiratorial and dangerous speech. Fables, poems and various other pictures in language are both directly employed by Socrates and the subject of more general discussion. Much of the argument centers on Alkibiades' understanding of what the words mean and on the implicit presence of values embedded in the language. They also spend much time discussing, in terms of rhetorical effect, the tailoring of comments to situations; at one point Socrates indicates he would not even name Alkibiades' condition if it weren't for the fact that they are completely alone. They refer to

levels of knowledge among the audience and the importance of this factor in effectively persuading one or many. And in a larger sense already alluded to, reflection on Plato's use of the dialogue form itself may also reveal features of language and aspects of its relation to action. Socrates seems intent upon increasing Alkibiades' awareness of the many dimensions to the problem of understanding the role of language in the life of man. Thus the reader of the First Alkibiades is invited to share as well in this education about the primary means of education: speech, that essential human power.

Perhaps it may be granted, on the basis of the above, that the general issue of language is at least a persistent theme in the dialogue. Once that is recognized it becomes much more obvious that speech is connected both to power, or the realm of action, and knowledge, the realm of thought. Speech and power, in the politically relevant sense, are thoroughly interwoven. The topics of freedom of speech and censorship are of paramount concern to all regimes, at times forming part of the very foundation of the polity. This is the most obvious connection: who is to have the right to speak about what, and who in turn is to have the power to decide this matter. Another aspect of speech which is crucial politically seems to be often overlooked and that is the expression of power in commands, instruction and explanation. The more subtle side of this political use of speech is that of education. Maybe not all political men do understand education to be of primary importance, but that clearly surfaces as one of the things which Alkibiades learns in this dialogue.

At the very least, the politically ambitious man seeks control over the education of others in order to secure his rule and make his political achievements lasting. With respect to education, the skilled

user of language has more power than someone who must depend solely on actions in this regard. Circumstances which are actually unique may be endlessly reproduced and reconsidered. By using speech to teach, the speaker gains a power over the listener that might not be available had he need to rely upon actions. Not only can he tell of things that cannot be seen (feelings, thoughts and the like), but he can invent stories about what does not even exist.

Myths and fables are generally recognized to have pedagogic value, and in most societies form an essential part of the core set of beliefs that hold the people together. Homer, Shakespeare and the Bible are probably the most universally recognized examples influencing western society. To mold and shape the opinions of men through fables, lies and carefully chosen truths is, in effect, to control them. Such use of language can be considered a weapon also, propaganda providing a most obvious example. Hobbes, for instance, recognizes these qualities of speech and labels them 'abuses.' Most of the abuse appears to be constituted by the deception or injury caused another; Hobbes all the while demonstrates himself to be master of the insult.[58] Summing up these observations, one notices that speech plays a crucial part in the realm of power, especially in terms of education, a paramount political activity.

The connection of speech to knowledge, the realm of thought is much less in need of comment. The above discussion of education points to the underlying concern about knowledge. Various subtleties in language (two of which - metaphor and irony - will be presently introduced), however, make it more than the instrument through which knowledge is gained, but actually may serve to increase a person's interest in attaining knowledge; that is, they make the end, knowledge, more attractive.

A most interesting understanding of speech emerges when one abstracts somewhat from actual power and actual knowledge to look at the relationship between the realms of action and thought. Action and thought, epitomized by politics and philosophy, both require speech if they are to interact. Politics in a sense affects thought, and thought should guide action. Both of these exchanges are normally effected through speech and may be said to describe the bounds of the subject area of political philosophy. Political philosophy deals with what men do and think (thus concerning itself with metaphysics, say, to the extent to which metaphysical considerations affect man). Political philosophy may be understood as philosophy about politics, or philosophy that is politic. In this latter sense, speech via the expression of philosophy in a politic manner, suggests itself to be an essential aspect to the connection between these two human realms - thought and action. The reader of the First Alkibiades should be alert to the ways in which language pertains to the relationship between Socrates and Alkibiades. For example, their concern for each other and promise to continue conversing might shed some light on the general requirements and considerations power and knowledge share. As has already been indicated, considerable attention is paid to various characteristics of speech in the discussion between the two men.

Rhetoricians, politicians, philosophers and poets, to mention but a few of those whose activity proceeds primarily through speech, are aware of the powers of language and make more or less subtle use of various modes of speech. The First Alkibiades teaches about language and effectively employs many linguistic devices. Called for at the outset is some introductory mention of a few aspects of language, in order that their use in the dialogue may be more readily reflected upon.

Metaphor, a most important example, is a complex and exciting feature of language. A fresh and vivid metaphor is a most effective influence on the future perceptions of those listening. It will often form a lasting impression. Surely a majority of readers are familiar with the experience of being unable to disregard an interpretation of something illuminated by an especially bright metaphor. Many people have probably learned to appreciate the surging power of language by having themselves become helplessly swamped in a sea of metaphor.

There are two aspects to the power of attracting attention through language that a master of metaphor, especially, can summon. Both indicate a rational component to language, but both include many more features of reason than mere logical deduction. The first is the power that arises when someone can spark connections between apparently unrelated parts of the world. This is an interesting and exciting feature of man's rational capability, deriving its charm partly from the natural delight people apparently take in having connections drawn between seemingly distinct objects.

The other way in which he can enthrall an audience is through harvesting some of the vast potential for metaphors that exist in the natural fertility of any language. There are metaphors in everyday speech that remain unrecognized (are forgotten) for so long that disbelief is experienced when their metaphoric nature is revealed. Men's opinions about much of the world is influenced by metaphor. A most important set of examples involve the manner in which the invisible is spoken of almost exclusively through metaphoric language based on the visible. This curious feature of man's rationality is frequently explored by Plato. The most famous example is probably Socrates'

description of education as an ascent out of a cave (Republic, 514a.ff.), but another perhaps no less important example occurs in the First Alkibiades. Not only is the invisible metaphorically explained via something visible, but the metaphor is that of the organ of sight itself (cf. 132c-133c, where the soul and the eye are discussed as analogues)!

The general attractiveness of metaphor also demonstrates that man is essentially a creature with speech. That both man and language must be understood in order for a philosophic explanation to be given of either, is indicated whenever one tries to account for the natural delight almost all people take in being shown new secrets of meaning, in discovering the richness of their own tongue, and in the reworking of images - from puns and complex word games to simple metaphors and idiomatic expressions. Man's rationality is bound up with language, and rationality may not be exclusively or even primarily logic; it is importantly metaphor.

Subtle use is often made of the captivating power of various forms of expression. One of the most alluring yet bedevilling of these is irony. Irony never unambiguously reveals itself but suggests mystery and disguise. This enhances its own attractiveness and simultaneously increases the charm of the subject on which irony is played; there seems little doubt that Socrates and Plato were able to make effective use of this feature for they are traditionally regarded as the past masters of it.

Eluding definition, irony seems not amenable to a simple classificatory scheme. It can happen in actions as well as speeches, in drama as well as actual life. It can occur in an infinite variety of situations. One cannot be told how exactly to look for irony; it cannot be reduced

to rules. But to discover its presence on one's own is thoroughly exciting (though perhaps biting). The possibility of double ironies increases the anxiety attending ironic speech as well as its attractiveness. The merest suggestion of irony can upset an otherwise tranquil moment of understanding. Probably all listeners of ironic speech or witnesses of dramatic irony have experienced the apprehensiveness that follows such an overturned expectation of simplicity.

It appears to be in the nature of irony that knowledge of its presence in no way diminishes its seductiveness but rather enhances its effectiveness. Once it is discovered, it has taken hold. This charming feature of Socrates' powerful speech, his irony, is acknowledged by Alkibiades even as he recognizes himself to be its principal target (Symposium 215a-216e).

The abundance of irony in the First Alkibiades makes it difficult for any passage to be interpreted with certitude. It is likely that the following commentary would be significantly altered upon the recognition of a yet subtler, more ironic, teaching in the dialogue. It is thus up to each individual, in the long run, to make a judgement upon the dialogue, or the interpretation of the dialogue; he must be wary of and come to recognize the irony on his own.

C. The Superior Man as a Problem for Political Philosophy

> One mark of a great man is the power of making lasting impressions upon people he meets. Another is so to have handled matters during his life that the course of after events is continuously affected by what he did.
>
> Winston Churchill
> Great Contemporaries

It may be provisionally suggested that both Socrates and Alkibiades are superior men, attracted respectively to knowledge and power.

Certainly a surface reading of the First Alkibiades would support such a judgement. One could probably learn much about the character of the political man and the philosophic man by simply observing Socrates and Alkibiades. It stands to reason that a wisely crafted dialogue representing a discussion between them would reveal to the careful, reflective reader deeper insight into knowledge, power and the lives of those dedicated to each.

Socrates confesses that he is drawn to Alkibiades because of the youth's unquenchable ambition for power. Socrates tells Alkibiades that the way to realizing his great aspirations is through the philosopher.[59] Accordingly Socrates proceeds to teach Alkibiades that the acquisition of knowledge is necessary in order that his will to power be fulfilled. By the end of the dialogue, Socrates' words have managed to secure the desired response from the man to whom he is attracted: Alkibiades in a sense redirects his eros toward Socrates. This sketch, though superficial, bespeaks the dialogue's promise to unravel some of the mysterious connections between knowledge and power as these phenomena are made incarnate in its two exceptional participants.

The significance of the superior man to political philosophy has, for the most part, been overlooked in the last century or so, the exceptions being rather notorious given their supposed relation to the largest political event of the Twentieth Century.[60] In contemporary analysis, the importance of great men, even in the military, has tended to be explained away rather than understood. This trend may be partly explained by the egalitarian views of the dominant academic observers of political things.

As the problem was traditionally understood, the superior man

tends to find himself in an uneasy relationship with the city. The drive, the erotic ambition distinguishes the superior man from most others, and in that ambition is constituted their real threat to the polity as well as their real value. No man who observed a war could persist in the belief that all citizens have a more or less equal effect on the outcome, on history. A certain kind of superiority becomes readily apparent in battle and the bestowal of public honors acknowledges its political value. Men of such manly virtue are of utmost necessity to all polities, at least in times of extremes. Moreover, political philosophers have heretofore recognized that there are other kinds of battlefields upon which superior men exercise their evident excellence.

It is, however, during times of peace that the community experiences fear about containing the lions,[61] recognizing that they constitute an internal threat to the regime. Thus, during times of peace a crucial test of the polity is made. A polity's ability to find a fitting place for its noble men speaks for the nobility of the polity. In many communities, the best youths turn to narrow specialization in particularized scientific disciplines, or to legal and academic sophistry, to achieve distinction. It is not clear whether this is due to the regime's practicing a form of politics that attracts but then debases or corrupts the better sort of youth, or because the best men find its politics repugnant and so redirect their ambitions toward these other pursuits. In any event, the situation in such communities is a far cry from that of the city which knows how to rear the lion cubs.

Not surprisingly, democracy has always had difficulty with the superior men. Ironically, today the recognition of the best men in society arises most frequently among those far from power or the desire

to enter politics. Those who hold office in modern democracies are not able to uphold the radically egalitarian premises of the regime and still consistently acknowledge the superiority of some men. This has repercussions at the base of the polity: the democratic election. Those bent on holding public office are involved in a dilemma. A man's claim to office is that he possesses some sort of expertise, yet he cannot maintain a platform of simple superiority in an egalitarian regime. Many aspirants are required to seek election on the basis of some feature of their character (such as their expenditure of effort) instead of their skills, and such criteria are often in an ambiguous relation to the duties of office.

The problem is yet more far-reaching. Those regimes committed to the enforced equalization of the unequal incongruously point with pride to the exceptional individuals in the history of their polities. A standard justification for communist regimes, for example, is to refer to the distinguished figures in the arts and sports of their nation. Implicitly the traditional view has been retained: great men are one of the measures of a great polity.

A less immediate but more profound problem for political philosophy is posed by the very concept of the best man. Three aspects of this problem shall be raised, the last two being more fully discussed as they arise in commenting upon the First Alkibiades.

All who have given the matter some thought will presumably agree that education is, in part at least, a political concern, and that the proper nurture of youth is a problem for political philosophy. Accordingly, an appropriate beginning is the consideration of the ends of nurture. The question of toward what goal the nurture of youth is to aim is a

question bound up with the views of what the best men are like. This is inevitably the perspective from which concerned parents adopt their own education policies. Since the young are nurtured in one manner or another regardless, all care given to the choice of nurtures is justified.[62]

It must be remembered that children will adopt models of behavior regardless of whether their parents have guided their choice. As the tradition reminds is, the hero is a prominent, universal feature in the nurture of children. Precisely for that reason great care ought to be taken in the formation and presentation (or representation) of heroic men and deeds. The heroes of history, of literature and of theater presumably have no slight impact on the character of youth. For instance, canons of honesty are suggested by the historical account of young Lincoln, codes of valor have been established by Akhilleus, and young men's opinions about both partnerships and self-reliance are being influenced by the Western Cowboy.

The religious reverence with which many young observe the every word and deed of their idols establishes "the hero" as a problem of considerable significance. One could argue that the hero should be long dead. His less than noble human characteristics can be excised from the public memory and his deeds suitably embellished (cf. Republic 391d.6). Being dead, the possibility of his becoming decadent or otherwise evil is eliminated. Although attractive, this suggestion presents a rather large problem, especially in a society in which there is any timocratic element. The honors bestowed on living men may be precisely what transforms them into the "flesh and blood" heroes of the young. Should honors not be delivered until after a man's death, however (when he cannot turn to drink, women or gambling), it may dampen many timocrats' aspirations.

If the superior man is not recognized during his lifetime, he must at least obtain some assurance of a lasting honor after his death. This might be difficult to do, if he is aware of how quickly and completely the opinions of those bestowing honor, the demos, shift. Since this turned out to assume great importance historically for Alkibiades, the reader of the First Alkibiades might be advised to pay attention to what Socrates teaches the young man about power and glory.

The role of heroes extends beyond their pedagogic function of supplying models to guide the ambitions of youth. Heroes contribute to the pride of a family, help secure the glory of a nation and provide a tie to the ancestral. Recognition of this should suffice to indicate that the problem of superior men is a significant one for political philosophy.

Presumably any political theory requires some account of the nature of man. It may already be clear at this point that a comprehensive philosophic account of man's nature must include a consideration of the superior man. Traditionally, in fact, the concept of the best man has been deemed central to an adequate understanding. Many people who would readily grant the importance of the problem of understanding human nature consider it to be a sort of statistical norm. That position does not concede the necessity of looking toward the best man. For the immediate purpose of analyzing this dialogue, it seems sufficient that the question be reopened, which may be accomplished simply by indicating that there are problems with seeing nature as "the normal."

Without any understanding of the best man (even one who is not actualized), comparison between men would be largely meaningless and virtually any observation of, or statement about persons would be

ambiguous since they involve terms which imply comparing men on some standard. There would be no consistent way to evaluate any deviation whatsoever from the normal. For example, sometimes it is better to be fierce, sometimes it is not. If one describes a man as being more capable of fierceness than most men one would not know how to evaluate him relative to those men, without more information. It is necessary to have an understanding of the importance of those matters in which it is better to be fierce, to the best man. If it is important for the best man to be capable of being very fierce, then, and only then, it seems, could one judge a man who is able to be fierce at times to be a better man with respect to that characteristic. Any meaningful description of him, then depends on the view of the best man. This is implicit in the common sense understanding anyway. The statement "X is more capable of fierceness than most men,' prompts an implicit qualitative judgement in most men's minds on the basis of their views of the best man. The statement "X has darker hair than most men," does not, precisely because most understandings of the best man do not specify hair color.

A concept of the best is necessary if a man is to be able to evaluate his position <u>vis a vis</u> others and discern with what he must take pains with himself. The superior man understands this. Aiming to actualize his potential to the fullest in the direction of his ideal, he obviously does not compete with the norm. He strives with the best of men or even with the gods. Whenever he sees two alternatives, he immediately wonders which is best. The superior youth comes to learn that a central question of his life is the question of with whom is his contest.

Having raised this second aspect of the philosophic concern about

the best man, one is led quite naturally to a related problem he poses for political philosophy with respect to what has been a perennial concern of the tradition, indeed perhaps its guiding question, namely: "What is the best regime?"

The consideration of the best regime may be in light of a concern for the "whole" in some sense, or for the citizen or for the "whole" in some sense, or from some other standpoint. Apart from the problem of how to understand "the whole," a large philosophic question remains regarding whether the best for a city is compatible with the best for a man. The notion of the superior man provides a guide of some sort (as the 'norm' does not) to the answer regarding what is best for a man; the view of the best regime suggests (as the 'norm' does not) what is good for a city. But what must one do if the two conflict? As has become apparent, the complex question of the priority of the individual or the social order is raised by the very presence of the superior man in a city. The dialogue at various points tacitly prompts the reader to consider some of the intricacies of this issue.

Upon considering what is best for man generally, for a man in particular, and for a city, one notices that most people have opinions about these things, and not all of them act upon these opinions. One eventually confronts a prior distinction, the difference between doing what one thinks is good, knowing what is good, and doing what one knows is good. While it is not entirely accurate to designate them respectively as power, knowledge, and knowledge with power, these terms suggest how the problems mentioned above are carried through the dialogue in terms of the concern for the superior man.

Provisionally, one may suggest that Alkibiades provides a classic

example of the superior man. In a sense not obvious to the average Athenian, so too is Socrates. They both pose distinct political problems, and they present interesting philosophic puzzles as well. But there is another reason, no less compelling for being less apparent, that recommends the study of the First Alkibiades. Since antiquity the First Alkibiades has been subtitled, "On the Nature of Man." At first blush this subtitle is not as fitting as the subtitles of some other aporetic dialogues.[63] The question "What is the nature of Man?" is neither explicitly asked nor directly addressed by either Socrates or Alkibiades, yet the reader is driven to consider it. One might immediately wonder why "Alkibiades" is the title of a dialogue on the nature of man, and why Socrates chooses to talk about man as such with Alkibiades.[64] Perhaps Alkibiades is particularly representative, or especially revealing about man. Perhaps he is unique or perhaps he is inordinately in need of such a discourse. One must also try to understand Socrates' purpose, comprehend the significance of any of Alkibiades' limitations, and come to an understanding of what the character of his eros is (e.g., is it directed toward power, glory, or is it just a great eros that is yet to be directed). In the course of grappling with such matters, one also confronts one's own advantages and liabilities for the crucial and demanding role of dialogic partner. Perhaps the very things a reader fastens his attentions upon are indicative of something essential about his own particular nature. If the reader is to come to a decision as to whether the subtitle affixed in antiquity to the dialogue is indeed appropriate, these matters must be judged in the course of considering the general question of whether the dialogue is indeed about "the nature of man."

The mystery and challenge of a dialogue may serve to enhance its

attractiveness. One of the most intriguing philosophic problems of the First Alkibiades may well be the question of whether it is in fact about man's nature. With a slight twist, the reader is faced with another example of Socrates' revision of Meno's paradox (Meno 80e). Sometimes when a reader finds what he is looking for, discovering something he was hoping to discover, it is only because his narrowness of attention or interest prevented him from seeing conflicting material, and because he expended his efforts on making what he saw conform to his wishes. The good reader of a dialogue will, as a rule, take great care to avoid such myopia. In order to find out whether the dialogue is primarily about the nature of man (and if so, what is teaches about the nature of man), the prudent reader will caution himself against begging the question, so to speak. If one sets out ignorant of what the nature of man is, one may have trouble recognizing it when one finds it. Conversely, to complete the paradox, to ask how and where to find it (in other words, inquiring as to how one will recognize it), implies that one ought already know what to expect from knowledge of it. This could be problematic, for the inquiry may be severely affected by a preconceived opinion about which question will be answered by it. "Philosophical prejudices" should have no part in the search for the nature of man.

This is a difficulty not faced to the same extent by other aporetic dialogues which contain a question of the form "What is _____?" Once this first question is articulated, the normal way of pursuing the answer is open to the reader. He may proceed naturally from conventional opinion, say, and constantly refine his views according to what he notices. It appears, however, that the reader of the First Alkibiades cannot be certain that it will address the nature of man, and the dialogue doesn't seem to

directly commence with a consideration of conventional opinions. Most readers of the dialogue know what a man is insofar as they could point to one (111b,ff.), but very few know what man is. Perhaps as the dialogue unfolds the careful reader will be educated to a point beyond being ignorant of how to look for something that he mightn't recognize even when he found it. By this puzzle the reader is drawn more deeply into the adventure of touching on the mysteries of his own nature. To borrow a metaphor from a man who likely knew more about Socrates and Alkibiades than has anyone else before or since, the same spirit of adventure permeates the quest for knowledge of man as characterizes sailing through perilous unknown waters on a tiny, frail craft, attempting to avoid perishing on the rocks. One can only begin with what one knows, such as some rudimentary views about navigation technique and more or less correct opinions about one's home port. Upon coming to appreciate the difficulties of knowing, fully and honestly, one's own nature, one realizes how treacherous is the journey. In all likelihood one will either be swamped, or continue to sail forever, or cling to a rock under the illusion of having reached the far shore.

This thesis is an introduction to the First Alkibiades. Through their discussion, and more importantly through his own participation in their discussion, Socrates and Alkibiades reveal to the reader something about the nature of man. Both the question of man's nature and the problem of the superior man have been neglected in recent political theory; especially the connection between them has been overlooked. To state the thesis of this essay with only slight exaggeration: an understanding of politics - great and small - is impossible without knowledge of man, and knowledge of man is impossible without knowledge of the best

of men. This thesis, investigating the dialogue entitled the First Alkibiades, focusses on certain things the dialogue seems to be about, without pretending to be comprehensive. It is like the dialogue in one respect at least: it is written in the interest of opening the door to further inquiry, and not with subsequently closing that door. Through a hopefully careful, critical reading of the First Alkibiades, I attempt to show that the nature of man and the superior man are centrally tied both to each other and to any true understanding of (great) political things. The spirit of the critique is inspired by the definition of a "good critic" ascribed to Anatole France: "A good critic is one who tells the story of his mind's adventures among the masterpieces."

AGON AND ALKIBIADES: AN INTERPRETATION OF PLATO'S FIRST ALKIBIADES

The First Alkibiades begins abruptly with the words "Son of Kleinias, I suppose you are wondering..." The reader does not know where the dialogue is taking place; nor is he informed as to how Socrates and Alkibiades happened to meet on this occasion. Interlocutors in other direct dramatic dialogues may sooner or later reveal this information in their speeches. In narrated dialogues, Socrates or another participant may disclose the circumstances of the discussion. In the case of this dialogue, however, no one does. The reader remains uncertain that it is even taking place in Athens proper and not in the countryside about the city. It may be reasonable to suggest that in this case the setting of the dialogue does not matter, or more precisely, the fact that there is no particular setting is rather what matters. The discussion is not dependent on a specific set of circumstances and the dialogue becomes universally applicable. The analysis will hopefully show the permanence of the problems thematically dealt with in the dialogue. Philosophically it is a discussion in no way bound by time or place. Further support is lent to this suggestion by the fact that there is no third person telling the story and Socrates is not reporting it to anyone. Nobody else is present.

Plato presents to the reader a dramatic exchange which is emphatically private. Neither Socrates nor Alkibiades have divulged the events of this first dialogic encounter between the man and the youth. The thorough privacy of the discussion as well as the silence concerning

the setting help to impute to the reader an appreciation of the autonomous nature of the discourse. There is a sense in which this dialogue could happen whenever two such people meet. Consequently, the proposition implicitly put forth to the reader is that he be alive to the larger significance of the issues treated; the very circumstances of the dialogue, as mentioned here, sufficiently support such a suggestion so as to place the onus for the argument in the camp of those who want to restrict the relevance of the dialogue to Socrates and Alkibiades in 5th century Athens.

That the two are alone is a feature that might be important to much of the reader's interpretation, for attention is drawn to the fact by the speakers themselves. Such privacy may have considerable philosophic significance, as it has a clear effect on the suitability of some of the material being discussed (e.g., 118b.5). There is no need for concern about the effect of the discussion upon the community as there might be were it spoken at the ekklesia; the well-being of other individuals need not dissuade them from examining radical challenges to conventional views, as might be the case were they conversing in front of children or at the marketplace; and there is no threat to either participant, as there might be were they to insult or publicly challenge someone's authority. Conventional piety and civic-mindedness need place no limitations on the depth of the inquiry; the only limits are those implicit in the willingness and capability of the participants. For example, an expectation of pious respect for his guardian, Perikles, could well interfere with Alkibiades' serious consideration of good statesmanship. The fact that they are unaccompanied, that Perikles is spoken of as still living, and that Socrates first mentions Perikles in

a respectful manner (as per 118c, 104b-c), permits a serious (if finally not very flattering) examination of his qualifications. Socrates and Alkibiades are alone and are not bound by any of the restrictions normally faced in discussions with an audience. The reader's participation, then, should be influenced by this spirit of privacy, at least in so far as he is able to grasp the political significance of the special "silence" of private conversation.

Somewhere in or about their usual haunts, Socrates and Alkibiades chanced to meet. If their own pronouncements can be taken literally, they were in the process of seeking each other. Alkibiades had been about to address Socrates but Socrates began first (104c-d). Since his daimon or god had only just ceased preventing him from talking to Alkibiades (105d), Socrates was probably waiting at Alkibiades' door (106e.10).

Although the location is unknown, the reader may glean from various of their comments a vague idea of the time of the dialogue. In this case, it appears, the actual dramatic date of the dialogue is of less importance than some awareness of the substance of the evidence enabling one to deduce it. Alkibiades is not yet twenty (123d) but he must be close to that age for he intends shortly to make his first appearance before the Athenian ekklesia (106c). Until today Socrates had been observing and following the youth in silence; they had not spoken to each other. This corroborates the suggestion that the action of the dialogue takes place before the engagement at Potidaia (thus before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, i.e. before 432 B.C.) for they knew each other by that time (Symposium 219e). Perikles and his sons are referred to as though they were living, offering further

confirmation that the dramatic date is sometime before or about the onset of the war with Sparta. The action of the dialogue must take place before that of the Protagoras,[65] since Socrates has by then a reputation of sorts among the young men, whereas Alkibiades seems not to have heard very much of Socrates at the beginning of the First Alkibiades.

Socrates addresses Alkibiades as the son of Kleinias. This perhaps serves as a reminder to the young man who believes himself so self-sufficient as to be in need of no one (104a). In the first place, his uniqueness is challenged by this address. His brother (mention of whom occurs later in the dialogue - 118e.4) would also properly turn around in response to Socrates' words. More importantly, however, it indicates that he too descended from a family. His ancestry is traced to Zeus (121a), his connections via his kin are alleged to be central to his self-esteem (104b), and even his mother, Deinomakhe, assumes a role in the discussion (123c). He is attached to a long tradition.

Through observation of Alkibiades' case in particular, the fact that a man's nature is tied to descent is made manifest. Alkibiades lost his father, Kleinias, when he was but a child (112c). He was made a ward of Perikles and from him received his nurture. For most readers, drawing attention to parentage would not distinguish nature from nurture. One is a child of one's parents both in terms of that with which one is born, one's biological/genetic inheritance, and of that which one learns. In the case of Alkibiades, however, to draw attention to his father is to draw attention to his heredity, whereas it was Perikles who raised him. The philosophic distinction between nature and nurture is emphasized by the apparent choice of addresses open to Socrates. Alkibiades is both the son of Kleinias and the ward of Perikles. It seems fitting that a

dialogue on human nature begin by drawing attention to two dominating features of all men's characters, their nature and their nurture.

Socrates believes that Alkibiades is wondering. He is curious about the heretofore hidden motives for Socrates' behavior. As a facet of a rational nature, wonder or curiosity separates men from the beasts. Wondering about the world is characteristic of children long before they fully attain reason, though it seems to be an indication of reason; most adults retain at least some spark of curiosity about something. The reader is reminded that the potential for wonder/reason is what is common to men but not possessed by beasts, and it serves to distinguish those whom we call human.

Reason in general, and wonder in particular, pose a rather complex problem for giving an account of the nature of man. Though enabling one to distinguish men from beasts, it also allows for distinctions between men. Some are more curious than others and some are far more rational than others. The philosopher, for example, appears to be dominated by his rational curiosity about the true nature of things. Some people wonder only to the extent of having a vague curiosity about their future. It appears that the criteria that allow one to hierarchically differentiate man from beast also provide for the rank-ordering of men. Some people would be "more human" than others, following this line of analysis. This eatablishes itself as an issue in understanding what, essentially, man is, and it may somehow be related to the general problem of the superior man, since his very existence invites comparison by a qualitative hierarchy. He might be the man who portrays the human characteristics in the ideal/proper quantities and proportions. He may thus aid our understanding of the standard for humans. Another

opportunity to examine this issue will arise upon reaching the part of the dialogue wherein Socrates points out that Alkibiades can come to know himself after he understands the standard for superior men, after he understands with whom he is to compete (119c,ff.).

There are at least two other problems with respect to the analysis of human curiosity. The first is that it seems to matter what people are curious about. Naturally children have a general wonder about things, but at a certain stage of development, reason reveals some questions are more important than and prior to others. It seems clear that wondering about the nature of the world (i.e., what it really is), its arche (basic principles), and man's proper place in it, or the kind of wondering traditionally associated with the philosophic enterprise, is of a higher order than curiosity about beetles, ancient architecture, details of history, or nuances of linguistic meaning. This further complicates the problems of rank-ordering men.

The second problem met with in giving an account of wonder and its appropriate place in life is that next to philosophers and children, few lives are more dominated by a curiosity of sorts than that of the "gossiping housewife." She is curious about the affairs of her neighbors and her neighbor's children. The passion for satisfying that curiosity is often so strong as to literally dominate her days. It seems impossible to understand such strong curiosity as "merely idle," but one would clearly like to account for it as essentially different from the curiosity of the philosopher. That the reader may not simply disregard consideration of gossiping women, or consider it at best tangential, is borne out by the treatment of curiosity in the First Alkibiades.

It is indicated in the dialogue that daughters, wives and mothers

must figure into an account of wonder. There are seven uses of 'wonder' (thaumadzein).[67] The first three involve Socrates and Alkibiades attesting to Alkibiades' wonder, including a rare pronouncement by Socrates of his having certain knowledge: he knows well that Alkibiades is wondering (104c.4; 103a.1, 104d.4). The last three are all about women wondering (123c.8, 123e.3, 124a.2). Keeping in mind the centrality of wondering to the nature of the philosopher (it seems to be a chief thing in his nature), one sees that careful attention must be given to curiosity. We have other reasons to suspect that femininity is in some way connected to philosophy, and perhaps a careful consideration of the treatment of women in the dialogue would shed light on the problem.

There is a sense in which wonder is a most necessary prerequisite to seeking wisdom (cf. also Theaitetos 155d). To borrow the conclusion of Socrates' argument with Alkibiades concerning his coming to know justice (106d-e; 109e), one has to be aware of a lack of something in order to seek it. A strong sense of wonder, or an insatiable curiosity drives one to seek knowledge. This type of intense wondering may conceivably be a major link in the connection between the reason and the spirit of the psyche (cf. Republic 439e-440a). In the Republic these two elements are said to be naturally allied, but the reader is never explicitly told how they are linked, or what generally drives or draws the spirit toward reason. An overpowering sense of wonder seems the most immediate link. Perhaps another link is supplied when the importance of the connection of knowledge to power is recognized; a connection between the two parts of the psyche might be supplied by a great will to power, for power presumably requires knowledge to be useful. However, final judgement as to how the sense of wonder and the desire for power

differ in this regard, and which, if any, properly characterizes the connections between the parts of Alkibiades' psyche must await the reader's reflection on the dialogue as a whole. Likewise, his evaluation as to which class of men contains Alkibiades will be properly made after he has finished the dialogue.

Socrates believes that Alkibiades is wondering. Precisely that feature of Alkibiades' nature is the one with which Socrates chooses to begin the discussion and therewith their relationship. One may thus explore the possibility that wondering is what distinguishes Alkibiades, or essentially characterizes him. The discussion to this point would admit of a number of possibilities. Curiosity could set Alkibiades apart from other political figures, or it may place him above men generally, indicating that he is one of the best or at least potentially one of the best men - should reason/curiosity prove to be characteristic of the best. Alkibiades' ostensible wondering could bespeak the high spirit which characterized his entire life; perhaps one of the reasons he would choose to die rather than remain at his present state (105a-b) is that he is curious to see how far he can go, how much he can rule.

Socrates remarks that he is Alkibiades' lover; he is the first of Alkibiades' lovers. Socrates suggests two features of his manner which, taken together, would be likely to have roused the wonder of Alkibiades. Socrates, the first lover, is the only one who remains; all the other lovers have forsaken Alkibiades. Secondly, Socrates never said a word to Alkibiades during his entire youth, even though other lovers pushed through hoardes of people to speak with Alkibiades. A youth continuously surrounded by a crowd of admirers would probably wish to know the motives of a most constant, silent observer - if he noticed him. Socrates has

at last, after many years, spoken up.

Assuring Alkibiades that no human cause kept him from speaking, Socrates intimates that a daimonic power had somehow opposed his uttering a single word. The precise nature of the power is not divulged. Obviously not a physical restraint such as a gag, it can nevertheless affect Socrates' actions. Socrates, one is led to believe, is a most rational man. If it was not a human cause that kept him from speaking, then Socrates' reason did not cause him to keep silent. It was not reason that opposed his speech. Whatever the daimonic power was, it was of such a force that it could match the philosopher's reason. An understanding of how Socrates' psyche would be under the power of this daimonic sign would be of great interest to a student of man. In at least Socrates' case, this power is comparable in force to the power of reason. Socrates tells Alkibiades that the power of the daimon in opposing his speaking was the cause of his silence for so many years. The reader does not forget, however, that the lengthy silence was not only Socrates'. Something else, perhaps less divine, kept Alkibiades silent.

It is noteworthy that the first power Socrates chooses to speak of with Alkibiades is a non-human one, and one which takes its effect by restraining speech. Alkibiades is interested in having control over the human world; the kind of power he covets involves military action and political management. Young men seem not altogether appreciative of speech. Even when they acknowledge the power made available by a positive kind of rhetorical skill, they do not appear especially concerned with any negative or restraining power that limits speech such as the power of this daimon. Not only is talk cheap, but it is for women

and old men, in other words, for those who aren't capable of actually doing anything. The first mention of power (dynamis) in the dialogue cannot appear to Alkibiades to pertain to his interest in ruling the human world, but it does offer the reader both an opportunity for reflection on power in general, and a promise to deal with the connection between power and speech in some fashion. What the dialogue teaches about language and power will be more deeply plumbed when Alkibiades learns the extent of the force of his words with Socrates (112e, ff.).

According to Socrates, Alkibiades will be informed of the power of this daimonic sign at some later time. Since apparently the time is not right now, either Socrates is confident that he and Alkibiades will continue to associate, or he intends to tell Alkibiades later during the course of this very dialogue. Socrates, having complied with his daimon, comes to Alkibiades at the time when the opposition ceases. He appears to be well enough acquainted with the daimon to entertain good hopes that it will not oppose him again.

By simple observation over the years, Socrates has received a general notion of Alkibiades' behavior toward his lovers. There were many and they were high-minded, but they fled from Alkibiades' surpassing self-confidence. Socrates remarks that he wishes to have the reasons for this self-confidence come to the fore. By bringing Alkibiades' reasons to speech, Socrates implies, among other things, that this sense of superiority does not have a self-evident basis of support. He also suggests that there is a special need to have reasons presented. Perhaps Alkibiades' understanding of his own feelings either is wrong or insufficient; at any rate, they have previously been left unstated. If they are finally revealed, Alkibiades will be compelled to assess them.

Socrates proceeds to list the things upon which Alkibiades prides himself.

Interestingly, given his prior claim that he learned Alkibiades' manner through observation, most of the things Socrates presently mentions are not things one could easily learn simply through observation of actions. One cannot see the mobility of Alkibiades' family or the power of his connections. More important to Socrates' point, one cannot see his pride in his family. He might "look proud," but others must determine the reason. It is difficult to act proud of one's looks, family and wealth while completely abstaining from the use of language. It has thus become significant to their relationship that Socrates was also able to observe Alkibiades' speech, for it is through speech that pride in one's family can be made manifest. By listing these features, Socrates simultaneously shows Alkibiades that he has given considerable thought to the character of the youth. He is able to explain the source of a condition of Alkibiades' psyche without having ever spoken to Alkibiades. Only a special sort of observer, it seems, could accomplish that.

Alkibiades presumes he needs no human assistance in any of his affairs;[68] beginning with the body and ending with the soul, he believes his assets make him self-sufficient. As all can see, Alkibiades is not in error believing his beauty and stature to be of the highest quality.[69] Secondly, his family is one of the mightiest in the city and his city the greatest in Greece. He has numerous friends and relatives through his father and equally through his mother, who are among the best of men. Stronger than the advantages of all those kinsmen, however, is the power he envisions coming to him from Perikles, the guardian of Alkibiades and his brother. Perikles can do what he likes in Greece and even in barbarian countries. That kind of power - the power to do as one likes -

Alkibiades is seeking (cf. 134e-135b). The last item Socrates includes in the list is the one Alkibiades least relies on for his self-esteem, namely his wealth.

Socrates places the greatest emphasis on Alkibiades' descent and the advantages that accrue therefrom. This is curious for he was purportedly supplying Alkibiades' reasons for feeling self-sufficient; if this is a true list, he has done the contrary, indicating Alkibiades to be quite dependent upon his family. Even so, the amount of stress on the family appears to exceed that necessary for showing Alkibiades not to be self-sufficient. As has already been observed, this is accomplished by paying close attention to the words at the start of the dialogue. At this point, Alkibiades' father's relations and friends, his mother's relations and friends, his political connections through his kinsmen and his uncle's great power are mentioned as well as the position of his family in the city and of his city in the Hellenic world. Relative to the other resources mentioned, Socrates goes into considerable depth with regards to Alkibiades' descent. It is literally the central element in the set of features that Socrates wanted to be permitted to name as the cause of Alkibiades' self-esteem. Quite likely then, the notion of descent and its connections to human nature (as Alkibiades' descent is connected, by Socrates' implication, to qualities of his nature) are more important to the understanding of the dialogue than appears at the surface. This discussion will be renewed later at the opening of the longest speech in the First Alkibiades. At that point both participants claim divine ancestry immediately after agreeing that better natures come from well-born families (120d-121a). That will afford the reader an opportunity to examine why they might both think their descent significant.

Socrates has offered this account of Alkibiades' high-mindedness suggesting they are Alkibiades' resources "beginning with the body and ending with the soul." In fact, after mentioning the excellence of his physical person, Socrates talks of Alkibiades' parents, polis, kinsmen, guardian, and wealth. Unless the reader is to understand a man's soul to be made by his family (and that is not said explicitly), these things do not even appear to lead toward a consideration of the qualities of his soul, but lead in a different direction. One might expect a treatment of such things as Alkibiades' great desires, passions, virtues and thoughts, not of his kinsfolk and wealth. Perhaps the reader is not yet close enough to an understanding of the human soul. At this point he may not be prepared to discern the qualities of soul in Alkibiades which would properly be styled "great." Socrates and Alkibiades may provide instruction for the reader in the dialogue, so that by the end of his study he will be better able to make such a judgement were he to venture one now, it might be based on conventional opinions of greatness. By not explicitly stating Alkibiades' qualities of soul at this point, the reader is granted the opportunity to return again, later, and supply them himself. The psyche is more difficult to perceive than the body, and as is discussed in the First Alkibiades (129a-135e), this significantly compounds the problems of attaining knowledge of either. If this is what Socrates is indicating by apparently neglecting the qualities of Alkibiades' soul, he debunks Alkibiades' assets as he lists them. The features more difficult to discern, if discerned, would be of a higher rank. Fewer men would understand them. Socrates, however, lists features of Alkibiades that are plain for all to see (104a; cf. 110e.2-3). The qualities that even the vulgar can appreciate, when said to be such,

are not what the superior youth would most pride himself upon. The many are no very serious judges of a man's qualities.

In view of these advantages, Alkibiades has elevated himself and overpowered his lovers, and according to Socrates, Alkibiades is well aware of how it happened that they fled, feeling inferior to his might. Precisely on account of this Socrates can claim to be certain that Alkibiades is wondering about him.[3] Socrates says that he "knows well" that Alkibiades must be wondering why he has not gotten rid of his eros. What he could possibly be hoping for, now that the rest have fled is a mystery. Socrates, by remaining despite the experience of the rest, has made himself intriguing. This is especially the case given his analysis of Alkibiades. How could Socrates possible hope to compete with Alkibiades in terms of the sort of criteria important to Alkibiades? He is ugly, has no famous family, and is poor. Yet Socrates had not been overpowered; he does not feel inferior. Here is indeed a strange case, or so it must seem to the arrogant young man. Socrates has managed to flatter Alkibiades by making him out to be obviously superior to any of his (other) lovers - but he also places himself above Alkibiades, despite the flattery.

In his first speech to Alkibiades, Socrates has praised him and yet undercut some of his superiority. He has aroused Alkibiades' interest both in Socrates and in Socrates' understanding of him. It is conceivable that no other admirer of Alkibiades has been so frank, and it is likely that none have been so strange - to the point of alluding to daimons. Yet something about Socrates and Socrates' peculiar erotic attraction to Alkibiades makes Alkibiades interested in hearing more from the man. It is clear that he cannot want to listen merely because

he enjoys being flattered and gratified, for Socrates' speech is ironic in its praise. He takes even as he gives.

Philosophically, this opening speech contains a reference to most of the themes a careful reader will recognize as being treated in the dialogue. Some of these should be listed to give an indication of the depths of the speech that remain to be plumbed. The reader is invited to examine the nature of power - what it is essentially and through what it affects human action. As conventionally understood, and as it is attractive to Alkibiades, power is the ability to do what one wants. According to such an account, it seems Perikles has power. This notion of power is complicated by the non-human power referred to by Socrates which stops one from doing what one wants. Power is also shown to be connected to speech. Another closely related theme is knowledge. All of these are connected explicitly in that the daimonic power knew when to allow speech. In the opening speech by Socrates, he claims to know something, and the reader is introduced to a consideration of observation and speech as sources of knowledge. He is also promised a look at what distinguishes one's perception of oneself from other's opinions of one, through Socrates' innuendo that his perception of Alkibiades may not be what Alkibiades perceives himself to be. There is also reference to a difference in ability to perceive people's natures - namely the many's ability is contrasted with Socrates', as is the ability of the high-minded suitors. The dialogue will deal with this theme in great depth, Should it turn out that this ability is of essential importance to a man's fulfillment, the reader is hereby being invited to examine what are the essentially different natures of men. Needless to say, the reader of the dialogue should return again and again to this speech, to the initial

treatment of these fundamental questions.

The relationship of body to soul, as well as the role of 'family' and 'polis' in the account of man's nature, are introduced here in the opening words. They indicate the vastness of the problem of understanding the nature of man. Socrates and Alkibiades seem superior to everyone else, but they too are separate. Socrates is shown to be unique in some sense and he cites especially strange causes of his actions. There is no mention of philosophy or philosopher in this dialogue, but the reader is introduced to a strange man whose eros is different from other men, including some regarded as quite excellent, and who is motivated by an as yet unexplained daimonic power.

On another level, the form of the speech and the delivery itself attest to some of the thought behind the appropriateness or inappropriateness of saying certain things in certain situations. Even the mechanics or logistics of the discussion prove illuminating to the problem. In addition, the very fact that they are conversing together and not depicted as fighting together in battle, or even debating with each other in the public assembly, renders it possible that speech - and perhaps even a certain kind of speech (e.g., private, dialectical) - is essential to the relation between the two superior men said to begin in the First Alkibiades.

Finally (though not to suggest that the catalogue of themes is complete), one must be awakened to the significance of the silence being finally broken. With Socrates' first words, the dialogue has begun to take place. Socrates and Alkibiades have commenced their verbal relationship. There is plenty of concern in the dialogue about language: what is to be said and not said, and when and how it is to be said. The

first speech by Socrates in the First Alkibiades has alerted the reader to this.

Alkibiades addresses Socrates for the first time. Though already cognizant of his name, Alkibiades does not appear to know anything else about him. To Socrates' rather strange introduction he responds that he was ready to speak with reference to the same issue; Socrates has just slightly beat him. Alkibiades seems to have been irritated by Socrates' constant presence and was on the brink of asking him why he kept bothering him. Socrates' opening remarks have probably mitigated his annoyance somewhat and allowed him to express himself in terms of curiosity instead. He admits, indeed he emphatically affirms (104d), that he is wondering about Socrates' motives and suggests he would be glad to be informed. Alkibiades thus expresses the reader's own curiosity; one wonders in a variety of respects about what Socrates' objective might be. Alkibiades might perceive different possibilities than the reader since he seems thoroughly unfamiliar with Socrates. A reader might wonder if Socrates wanted to influence Alkibiades, and to what end. Did Socrates want to make Alkibiades a philosopher; what kind of attraction did he feel for Alkibiades; why did he continue to associate with him? These questions and more inevitably confront the reader of the First Alkibiades even though they might at first appear to be outside the immediate bonds of the dialogue. For these sorts of questions are carried to a reading of the dialogue, as it were; and given the notoriety of Alkibiades and of Socrates, it is quite possible that they were intended to be in the background of the reader's thoughts. Perhaps the dialogue will provide at least partial answers.

If Alkibiades is as eager to hear as he claims, Socrates can

assume that he will pay attention to the whole story. Socrates will not then have to expend effort in keeping Alkibiades' attention, for Alkibiades has assured him he is interested. Alkibiades answers that he certainly shall listen.

Socrates, not quite ready to begin, insists that Alkibiades be prepared for perhaps quite a lengthy talk. He says it would be no wonder if the stopping would be as difficult as the starting was. One does not expect twenty years of non-stop talk from Socrates, naturally, and so one is left to wonder - despite (or perhaps because of) his claim that there is no cause for wonder[70] - why he is making such a point about this beginning and the indeterminacy of the ending. The implication is that there remains some acceptable and evident relation between beginnings and endings for the reader to discern. In an effort to uncover what he is, paradoxically, not to wonder about, the careful reader will keep track of the various things that are begun and ended and how they are begun and ended in the First Alkibiades.

Although innocuous here, Alkibiades' response "speak good man, I will listen," gives the reader a foreshadowing of his turning around at the end of the dialogue. There it is suggested that Alkibiades will silently listen to Socrates. Until the time of the dialogue the good man has been silent, listening and observing while any talking has been done by Alkibiades or his suitors.

Assured of a listener, Socrates begins. He is convinced that he must speak. However difficult it is for a lover to talk to a man who disdains lovers, Socrates must be daring enough to speak his mind. This is the first explicit indication the reader is given concerning certain qualities of soul requisite for speaking, not only for acting. It also

suggests some more or less urgent, but undisclosed, necessity for Socrates to speak at this time. Should Alkibiades seem content with the above mentioned possessions, Socrates is confident that he would be released from his love for Alkibiades - or so he has persuaded himself. Socrates is attracted to the unlimited ambition Alkibiades possesses.

The caveat introduced by Socrates (about his having so persuaded himself) draws attention to the difference between passions and reason as guides to action, and perhaps also a difference between Socrates and other men. For the most part one cannot simply put an end to passions on the basis of reason. One may be able to substitute another passion or appetite, but it is not as easy to rid oneself of it. However, instead of having to put away his love, Socrates is going to lay Alkibiades' thought open to him.

Socrates intends to reveal to Alkibiades the youth's ambition. This can only be useful in the event that he has never considered his goals under precisely the same light that Socrates will shed on them. By doing this Socrates will also accomplish his intention of proving to Alkibiades that he has paid careful attention to the youth (105a). Alkibiades should be in a position to recognize Socrates' concern by the end of this speech; this suggests a capability on the part of both. Many cannot admit the motives of their own actions, much less reveal to someone else that person's own thoughts. Part of the significance of the following discussion, therefore, is to indicate both Socrates' attentiveness to Alkibiades and Alkibiades' perception of it.

Should some (unnamed) god ask Alkibiades if he would choose to die rather than be satisfied with the possessions he has, he would choose to die. That is Socrates' belief. If Socrates is right, it

bespeaks a high ambition for Alkibiades, and it does so whether or not Alkibiades thought of it before. His possessions, mentioned so far, include beauty and stature, great kinsmen and noble family, and great wealth (though the last is least important to him). In an obvious sense, Alkibiades must remain content with some of what he has. He cannot, for example, acquire a greater family. His ambition, then, as Socrates indicates, is for something other than he possesses. The hopes of Alkibiades' life are to stand before the Athenian ekklesia and prove to them that he is more honorable than anyone, ever, including Perikles. As one worthy of honor he should be given the greatest power, and having the greatest power here, he would be the greatest among Greeks and even among the barbarians of the continent.

If the god should further propose that Alkibiades could be the ruler of Europe on the condition that he not pass into Asia, Socrates believes Alkibiades would not choose to live. He desires to fill the world with his name and power. Indeed Socrates believes that Alkibiades thinks no man who ever lived worthy of discussion besides Kyros and Xerxes (the Great Kings of Persia). Of this Socrates claims to be sure, not merely supposing - those are Alkibiades' hopes.

There are a number of interesting features about the pretense of Alkibiades responding to a god. Alkibiades might not admit the extent of his ambition to the Athenian people who would fear him, or even to his mother, who would fear for him; it therefore would matter who is allegedly asking the question. It is a god, an unidentified god whose likes and dislikes thus remain unknown. Alkibiades cannot take into account the god's special province and adjust his answer accordingly. The significance of the god is most importantly that he is more powerful

than Alkibiades can be. But why could not Socrates have simply asked him, or, failing that, pretend to ask him as he does in a moment? It is possible that speaking with an omniscient god would allow Alkibiades to reveal his full desire; he would not be obliged to hid his ambition from such a god as he would from most men in democratic Athens. But it is also plausible that Socrates includes the god in the discussion for the purpose of limiting Alkibiades' ambition (or perhaps as a standard for power/knowledge). Not to suggest that Socrates means to moderate what Alkibiades can do, he nevertheless must have realistic bounds put upon his political ambition. Assume, for the moment, that more questions naturally follow the proposal of limiting his rule to Europe. If Alkibiades were talking to Socrates (instead of to a deity with greater power), he might not stop at Asia. If he thought of it, he might wish to control the entire world and its destiny. He would dream that fate or chance would even be within the scope of his ambition.

The god in this example is presented as being in a position to determine Alkibiades' fate; he can limit the alternatives open to Alkibiades and can have him die. With Socrates' illustration, Alkibiades is confronting a being which has a power over him that he cannot control. The young man is at least forced to pretend to be in a situation in which he cannot even decide which options are available. It is important for a political ruler to realize the limits placed on him by fate. The notion that the god is asking Alkibiades these questions makes it unlikely that Alkibiades would answer that he should like to rule heaven and earth, or even that he would like supreme control of earth (for that is likely to be the god's own domain). Alkibiades probably won't suggest to a god that he wants to rule Fate or the gods of the Iliad

who hold the fate of humans so much in hand. Chance cannot be controlled by humans, either through persuasion or coersion. It can only have its effect reduced by knowledge. Alkibiades' political ambitions have to be moderated to fit what is within the domain of fate and chance and to be educated about the limits of the politically possible. Socrates, by pretending that a god asks the questions, can allow Alkibiades to admit the full extent of his ambitions over humans, but it also serves to keep him within the arena of human politics. If he would have answered Socrates or a trusted friend in discussion, he might not have easily accepted that limit. It is necessary for any politically ambitious man, and doubly so if he is young, to cultivate a respect for the limits of what can politically be accomplished under one's full control. This may have helped Alkibiades establish a political limit in his own mind.[71]

Another feature of the response to the god which should be noted is that it marks the second of three of Socrates' exaggerated claims to know aspects of Alkibiades' soul. In the event that the reader should have missed the first one wherein he claims to "know well" that Alkibiades wonders (104c), Socrates here emphasizes it. He is not simply inferring or guessing, he asserts; he knows this is Alkibiades' hope (105c). Shortly he will claim to have observed Alkibiades during every moment the boy was out of doors, and thus to know all that Alkibiades has learned (106e).

Just as it is impossible for Socrates to have watched Alkibiades at every moment, so he cannot be certain of what thought is actually going through Alkibiades' mind. Socrates' claim to knowledge has to be based on something other than physical experience or being taught. Alkibiades has not told anyone that these are his high hopes.

Perhaps Socrates' knowledge is grounded in some kind of experience. He knows what state Alkibiades' soul is in because he knows what Alkibiades must hope, wonder and know. It may be that Socrates has an access to this knowledge of Alkibiades' soul through his own soul. His soul may be or may have been very like Alkibiades'. Since Socrates will later argue that one cannot know another without knowing oneself (133c-e), perhaps one of the reasons he knows Alkibiades' soul so well is that it matches his in some way.[72] It is not out of the question that their souls share essential features and that those features perhaps are not shared by all other men. Clearly not all other men have found knowledge of Alkibiades' soul as accessible as has Socrates. And Socrates will be taking Alkibiades' soul on a discussion beyond the bounds of Athenian politics and politicians. He instructs Alkibiades that his soul cannot be patterned upon a conventional model, just as Socrates is obviously not modelling himself upon a standard model. These two men are somehow in a special position for understanding each other, and their common sight beyond the normally accepted standards may be what allows Socrates to make such apparently outrageous claims.

At this point, instead of waiting to see how Alkibiades will respond, Socrates manufactures his own dialogue, saying that Alkibiades would naturally ask what the point is. He is supposing that Alkibiades recognizes the truth of what has gone before. Since it is likely that Alkibiades would have enjoyed the speech to this point and thought it good, Socrates must bring him back to the topic. By using this device of a dialogue within a speech, Socrates is able to remind Alkibiades (and the reader) - by pretending to have Alkibiades remind Socrates - that they were supposed to learn not Alkibiades' ambitions, but those

of Socrates (supposing that they are indeed different).

Socrates responds (to his own question) that he conceives himself to have so great a power over Alkibiades that the dear son of Kleinias and Deinomakhe will not be able to achieve his hopes without the philosopher's assistance (105d). Because of this power the god prevented him from speaking with Alkibiades. Socrates hopes to win as complete a power over Alkibiades as Alkibiades does over the polis. They both wish to prove themselves invaluable, Socrates by showing himself more worthy than Alkibiades' guardian or relatives in being able to transmit to him the power for which he longs. The god prevented Socrates from talking when Alkibiades was younger, that is, before he held such great hopes. Now, since Alkibiades is prepared to listen, the god has set him on. Alkibiades wants power but he does not know what it is, essentially. Yet he must come to know in order not to err and harm himself. Part of the relationship between philosophy and politics is suggested here, and perhaps also some indication of why Socrates and Alkibiades need each other. An understanding of the causes of their coming together would be essential to an account of their relation, it seems, and such understanding is rendered more problematic by the role of the god.

Socrates wants as complete power over Alkibiades as Alkibiades does over the polis. If one supposes that the power is essentially similar, this might imply that Socrates would actually have the power over the polis. A complete power to make someone else do as one wants (as power is conventionally understood) seems to be the same over an individual as over a state. Socrates and Alkibiades hope to prove themselves invaluable (105e). That is not the same as being worthy of honor (105b); past performance is crucial to the question of one's

honor, whereas a possibility of special expertise in the future is sufficient to indicate one is invaluable. If a teacher is able to promise that his influence will make manifest to one the problems with one's opinions, and will help to clarify them, the teacher has indicated himself to be invaluable. Should one then, on the basis of the teacher's influence change one's opinions, and thus one's advice and actions, the teacher will, in effect, be the man with power over all that is affected by one's advice and actions, over all over which one has power.

Socrates, in affecting politically-minded youths, has an effect on the polity. To have power over the politically powerful is to have power in politics. Socrates' daimon had not let Socrates approach while Alkibiades' hopes for rule were too narrowly contained. His ambitions had to become much greater. If for no other reason than to see that over which Socrates expects or intends to have indirect power, one should be eager to discover Alkibiades' ambition - to discover that end which he has set for himself, or which Socrates will help to set for him. The reader also has in mind the historical Alkibiades: to the extent to which Alkibiades' designs in Europe and Asia did come to pass, was Socrates responsible as Plato, here, has him claim to be? The reader might also be curious about the reverse: what actions of the historical Alkibiades make this dialogue (and Socrates' regard) credible?

Alkibiades is astounded, Socrates sounds even stranger than he looks. But Alkibiades' interest is aroused, even if he is skeptical. He doesn't admit to the ambitions that have been listed; however he will concede them for the sake of finding out just how Socrates thinks of himself as the sole means through whom Alkibiades can hope to realize them. Perhaps he never had the opportunity to characterize his ambitions

that way - he may never have talked to a god. Socrates may only have clarified those hopes for Alkibiades; but on the other hand, the philosopher (partly, at least) may be responsible for imparting them to the young man. At any rate, even if Socrates merely made these goals obvious to the youth, one must wonder as to his purpose. Alkibiades feels confident in claiming that no denial on his part will persuade Socrates. He asks Socrates to speak (106a).

Socrates replies with a question which he answers himself. He asks if Alkibiades expects him to speak in the way Alkibiades normally hears people speak - in long speeches. Alkibiades' background is thus indicated to some extent. He has heard orators proclaim.[73] Socrates points out that he will proceed in a way that is unusual to Alkibiades - at least in so far as proving claims. By suggesting there is more than one way to speak, Socrates indicates that differences of style are significant in speech, and he invites the reader to judge/consider which is appropriate to which purposes.

Socrates protests that his ability is not of that sort (the orator's), but that he could prove his case to Alkibiades if Alkibiades consents to do one bit of service. By soliciting Alkibiades' efforts, Socrates may be intending to gain a deeper commitment from the youth. If he is responsible somewhat for the outcome he may be more sincere in his answers.[74] Alkibiades will consent to do a service that is not difficult; he is interested but not willing to go to a great deal of trouble. At this stage of the discussion he has no reason to believe that fine things are hard.[75] Upon Socrates' query as to whether answering questions is considered difficult, Alkibiades replies that it is not. Socrates tells him to answer and Alkibiades tells Socrates to

ask. His response suggests that Alkibiades has never witnessed a true dialectical discussion. He has just played question and answer games. Not many who have experienced a dialogue, and even fewer who have spoken with Socrates, would say it is not hard. Alkibiades, too, soon experiences difficulty.

Socrates asks him if he'll admit he has these intentions but Alkibiades won't affirm or deny except to get on with the conversation. Should Socrates want to believe it he may; Alkibiades desires to know what is coming before he acknowledges more.

Accepting this, Socrates proceeds. Alkibiades, he notes, intends shortly to present himself as an advisor to the Athenians. If Socrates were to take hold[76] of him as he was about to ascend the rostrum in front of the ekklesia and were to ask him upon what subject they wanted advice such as he could give, and if it was a subject about which Alkibiades knew better than they, what would he answer?

This is an example of a common Socratic device, one of imagining that the circumstances are other than they are. Socrates hereby employs it for the third time in the dialogue, and each provides a different effect. On the first occasion, Socrates pretended a god was present to provide Alkibiades with an important choice. Socrates did not speak in his own name. The second example was when Socrates ventured that Alkibiades would ask a certain question, and so answered it without waiting to see if he would indeed have asked that question. In both of those, the physical setting of the First Alkibiades was appropriate to his intentions. This time, however, Socrates supplies another setting - a very different setting - for a part of the discussion.

Speech is plastic in that it enables Socrates to manufacture an

almost limitless variety of situations. By the sole use of human reason and imagination, people are able to consider their actions in different lights. This is highly desirable as it is often difficult to judge a decision from within the context in which it was made. The malleability of circumstances that is possible in speech allows one to examine thoughts and policies from other perspectives. One may thus, for example, evaluate whether it is principle or prejudice that influences one's decisions, or whether circumstance and situation play a large or a small role in the rational outcome of the deliberation. This rather natural feature of reason also permits some consideration of consequences without having to effect those consequences, and this may result in the aversion of disastrous results.[77]

The plastic character of speech is crucial to philosophic discourse as well, providing the essential material upon which dialectics is worked. In discussion, the truly important features of a problem may be more clearly separated from the merely incidental, through the careful construction of examples, situations and counterexamples. If not for the ability to consider circumstances different from the one in which one finds oneself, thinking and conversing about many things would be impossible. And this is only one aspect of the plasticity of speech which proves important to philosophic discussion. Good dialogic partners exhibit this ability, since they require speech for much more than proficiency in logical deduction. Speech and human imagination must work upon each other. Participants in philosophical argument must recognize connections between various subjects and different circumstances. To a large extent, the level of thought is determined by the thinker's ability to 'notice' factors of importance to the inquiry at

hand. The importance of 'noticing' to philosophic argument will be considered with reference to two levels of participation in the First Alkibiades, both of which clearly focus on the prominence of the above mentioned unique properties of speech as opposed to action.

'Noticing' is important to dialectics in that it describes how, typically, Socrates' arguments work. An interlocutor will suggest, say, a solution to a problem, and upon reflection, Socrates - or another interlocutor (e.g., as per 110e) - will notice, for example, that the solution apparently doesn't work in all situations (i.e., a counter-example occurs to him), or that not all aspects of the solution are satisfactory, and so on. The ability of the participants to recognize what is truly important to the discussion, and to notice those features in a variety of other situations and concerns, is what lends depth to the analysis. As this has no doubt been experienced by anyone who has engaged in serious arguments, it presumably need not be further elaborated.

The other aspect in which 'noticing' is important to philosophy and how it influences, and is in turn influenced by, rational discourse is in terms of how one ought to read a philosophic work. As hopefully will be shown in this commentary on the First Alkibiades, a reader's ability to notice dramatic details of the dialogue, and his persistence in carefully examining what he notices, importantly affects the benefit he derives from the study of the dialogue. Frequently, evidence to this effect can be gathered through reflective consideration of Socrates' apparently off-hand examples, which turn out upon examination to be neither offhand in terms of their relation to significant aspects of the immediate topic, nor isolated in terms of bringing the various topics in the dialogue into focus. As shall become more apparent as the analysis

proceeds, the examples of ships and doctors, say, are of exceedingly more philosophic importance than their surface suggests. Not only do they metaphorically provide a depth to the argument (perhaps unwitnessed by any participant in the dialogue besides the reader) but through their repeated use, they also help the reader to discern essential philosophic connections between various parts of the subject under discussion.

The importance of 'recognition' and 'noticing' to dialectics (and the importance of the malleability of subject matter afforded by speech) may be partly explained by the understanding of the role of metaphor in human reason. Dialectics involves the meticulous division of what has been properly collected (c.f., for example Phaidros 266b). Time and time again, evidence is surveyed by capable partners and connections are drawn between relevantly similar matters before careful distinctions are outlined. The ability to recognize similarities, to notice connections, seems similar to the mind's ability to grasp metaphor. Metaphor relies to an important extent on the language user's readiness to 'collect' similar features from various subjects familiar to him, a procedure the reader of the First Alkibiades has observed to be crucial to the philosophic enterprise.

Socrates often refrains from directly asking a question, prefacing it by "supposing someone were to ask" or even "supposing I were to ask." The circumstances of the encounters need to be examined in order to understand his strategy. What might be the relevance of Socrates asking Alkibiades to imagine he was about to ascend the platform, instead of, for example, in the market place, in another city, near a group of young men, or in the privacy of his own home? And why could not the setting be left precisely the same as the setting of the dialogue? The situation at the base of the platform in front of the

ekklesia is, needless to say, quite a bit different from the situation they are in now. Alkibiades is not likely to give the same answer if his honor and his entire political career are at stake, as they might be in such a profoundly public setting. Socrates' device, on this occasion helps serve to indicate that what counts as politic, or polite, speech varies in different circumstances.

As Socrates has constructed the example, the Athenians proposed to take advice on a subject and Alkibiades presumed to give them advice. This might severely limit the subjects on which Alkibiades or another politician could address them. Were the ekklesia about to take counsel on something, it would be a matter they felt was settled by special knowledge, and a subject on which there were some people with recognizable expertise. The kinds of questions they believe are settled by uncommon knowledge or expertise may be rather limited. It is not likely that they would ask for advice on matters of justice. Most people feel they are competent to decide that (i.e., that the knowledge relevant to deciding is generally available, or common). Expertise is acknowledged in strategy and tactics, but knowledgeability about politics in general is less likely to be conceded than ability in matters of efficacy. All of these sentiments limit the kinds of advice which can be given to the ekklesia, and the councillor's problems are compounded by such considerations as what things can be persuasively addressed in public speeches to a mixed audience, and what will be effective in pleasing and attracting the sympathy of the audience to the speaker. To be rhetorically effective one must work with the beliefs/opinions/prejudices people confidently and selfishly hold.

Alkibiades agrees with Socrates that he would answer that it was

a subject about which he had better knowledge. He would have to. If Alkibiades wishes to be taken seriously by them, he should so answer in front of the people. Even if he would be fully aware of his ignorance, he might have motives which demand an insistence on expertise. He couldn't admit to several purposes for which he might want to influence the votes of the citizenry. Not all of those reasons can be made known to them; not all of those reasons can be voiced from the platform at the ekklesia. Sometimes politicians have to make decisions without certain knowledge, but must nevertheless pretend confidence. These considerations indicate again the importance of the role of speech to the themes of this dialogue. There is a difference between public and private speech. Some things simply cannot be said in front of a crowd of people, and other things which would not be claimed in private conversation with trusted friends would have to be affirmed in front of the ekklesia. Just as a speaker may take advantage of the fact that crowds can be aroused and swept along by rhetoric that would not so successfully move an individual (e.g., patriotic speeches inciting citizens to war, and on the darker side, lynch mobs and riots), so he understands that he could never admit to a crowd things he might disclose to a trusted friend (e.g., criticizing religious or political authorities).

Socrates suggests that Alkibiades believes he is a good advisor on that which he knows, and those would be things which he learned from others or through his own discovery. Alkibiades agrees that there don't seem to be any other alternatives. Socrates further asks if he would have learned or discovered anything if he hadn't been willing to learn or inquire into it and whether one would ask about or learn what one thought one knew. Alkibiades readily agrees that there must have been

a period in his life when he might have admitted to ignorance to which he doesn't admit now. Socrates suggests that one learns only what one is willing to learn and discovers only what one is willing to inquire into. The asymmetry of this may indicate the general problems of the argument as the difference in phrasing (underlined) alerts the reader to examine it more closely.

Discoveries, of course, usually involve a large measure of accident or chance. And if they are the result of an inquiry, the inquiry often has a different or more general object. Columbus didn't set out to discover the New World; he wanted to establish a shorter trading route to the Far East. Darwin did not set out to discover evolution; he sought to explain why species were different. Earlier he did not set out to discover that species were different; he observed the animal kingdom. Not only may one stumble upon something by accident, but by looking for one thing one may come to know something else. For example, someone might not be motivated by a recognition of ignorance but may be trying to prove a claim to knowledge. In the search for proof he may find the truth. Or, alternatively, in the pursuit of something altogether different, such as entertainment through reading a story, one may discover that another way of life is better. The argument thus appears to be flawed in that it is not true that one discovers only what one is willing to inquire into. Thus Alkibiades may have discovered what he now claims to know without ever having sought it as a result of recognizing his ignorance. Socrates has been able to pass this argument by Alkibiades because of the asymmetry of the statement. Had he said "one discovers only what one is willing to discover," Alkibiades might have objected.

Another difficulty with the argument is that one is simply not always willing to learn what others teach and one nevertheless may learn. One might actually be unwilling, but more often one is simply neutral, or oblivious to the fact that one is learning. In the case of the former (learning despite being unwilling), one need only remember that denying what one hears does not keep one from hearing it. Propaganda can be successful even when it is known to be propaganda.

However, by far the most common counter-example to Socrates' argument is the learning that occurs in everyday life. Many things are not learned as the result of setting out to learn. Such knowledge is acquired in other ways. Men come to have a common sense understanding of cause and effect by simply doing and watching. One learns one's name and who one's mother is long before choosing to learn, being willing to study, or coming to recognize one's ignorance. Language is learned with almost no conscious effort, and one is nurtured into conventions without setting out to learn them. Notions of virtues are gleaned from stories and from shades of meaning in the language, or even as a result of learning a language. And, in an obvious sense, whenever anything is heard, something is learned - even if only that such a person said it. One cannot help observing; one does not selectively see when one one's eyes are open, and one cannot even close one's ears to avoid hearing.

The above are, briefly, two problems with the part of Socrates' argument that suggests people learn or discover only what they are willing to learn or inquire into. The other parts of the argument may be flawed as well. Socrates has pointed to the reader's discovery of some flaws by a subtle asymmetry in his question. It is up to the reader to examine the rest (in this case - to be willing to inquire into

it). For example, there may be difficulties with the first suggestion that one knows only what one has learned or discovered. It is possible that there are innate objects of knowledge and that they are important to later development. Infants, for example, have an ability to sense comfort and discomfort which is later transferred into feeling a wide variety of pleasures and pains. They neither learn this, nor discover it (in any ordinary sense of "discovery"). The sense of pleasure and pain quite naturally is tied to and helps to shape a child's sense of justice (110b), and may thus be significant to the argument about Alkibiades' knowledge or opinions about justice. In any event, closer examination of Socrates' argument has shown the reader that the problem of knowing is sufficiently complex to warrant his further attention. The rest of the dialogue furnishes the careful reader with many examples and problems to consider in his attempt to understand how he comes to know and what it means to know.

Socrates knows quite well what things Alkibiades has learned, and if he should omit anything in the relating, Alkibiades must correct him. Socrates recollects that he learned writing, harping and wrestling - and refused to learn fluting. Those are the things Alkibiades knows then, unless he was learning something when he was unobserved - but that, Socrates declares, is unlikely since he was watching whenever Alkibiades stepped out of doors, by day or by night.

The reader will grant that the last claim is an exaggeration. Socrates could not have observed every outdoor activity of the boy for so many years. Yet Socrates persists in declaring that he knows what Alkibiades learned out of doors. As suggested earlier, Socrates may be indicating that he knows Alkibiades through his own soul. In that event

one must try to understand why Socrates couldn't likewise claim to know what went on indoors, or why Socrates doesn't announce to Alkibiades an assumption that what goes on indoors is pretty much the same everywhere. The reader may find what Alkibiades may have learned "indoors" much more mysterious, and he may consider it odd that Socrates does not have access to that. What occurs indoors (and perhaps to fully understand one would need to acknowledge a metaphoric dimension to "indoor") that would account for Socrates drawing attention to his knowledge of the outdoor activities of Alkibiades?

Even if one confines one's attention to the literal meaning, there is much of importance in one's nurture that happens inside the home. Suffice it to notice two things. The first is that the domestic scene in general, and household management in particular, are of crucial importance to politics. The second is that the teachers inside the home are typically the womenfolk.

These are of significance both to this dialogue and (not unrelated) to an understanding of politics. Attention is directed, for example, toward the maternal side of the two participants in this dialogue.[78] In addition, as has already been mentioned, the womenfolk in this dialogue are the only ones who wonder, besides Alkibiades. The women are within (cf. Symposium 176e); they have quite an effect on the early nurture of children (cf. Republic 377b-c and context). Perhaps the women teach something indoors that Socrates could not see, or would not know regardless of how closely akin he was to Alkibiades by nature. If that is so, the political significance of early education, of that education which is left largely to women, assumes a great importance. Women, it is implied, are able to do something to sons that men cannot,

and perhaps even something which men cannot fully appreciate. An absolutely crucial question arises: How is it proper for women to influence sons?

Socrates proceeds to find out which of the areas of Alkibiades' expertise is the one he will use in the assembly when giving advice. In response to Socrates' query whether it is when the Athenians take advice on writing or on lyre playing that Alkibiades will rise to address them, the young man swears by Zeus that he will not counsel them on these matters. (The possibility is left open that someone else would advise the Athenians on these matters at the assembly). And, Socrates adds, they aren't accustomed to deliberating about wrestling in the ekklesia. For some reason, Socrates has distinguished wrestling from the other two subjects. Alkibiades will not advise the Athenians on any of the three; he will not talk about writing or lyre-playing even if the subject would come up; he will not speak about wrestling because the subject won't come up. Regardless of the reader's suspicion that the first two subjects are also rarely deliberated in the assembly, he should note the distinction Socrates draws between the musical and the gymnastic arts. The attentive reader will also have observed that the education a boy receives in school does not prepare him for advising men in important political matters; it does not provide him with the kinds of knowledge requisite to a citizen's participation in the ekklesia.

But then on what will Alkibiades advise the Athenians? It won't be about buildings or divination, for a builder will serve better (107a-b). Regardless of whether he is short, tall, handsome, ugly, well-born or base-born, the advice comes from the one who knows, not the wealthy; the reader might notice that this undercuts all previously mentioned

bases of Alkibiades' self-esteem. According to Socrates, the Athenians want a physician to advise them when they deliberate on the health of the city; they aren't concerned if he's rich or poor, Socrates suggests, as if being a successful physician was in no way indicated by financial status.

There are a number of problems with this portion of the argument. Firstly, the advisor's rhetorical power (and not necessarily his knowledge) is of enhanced significance when that of which he speaks is something most people do not see to be clearly a matter of technical expertise, or even of truth or falsity instead of taste. This refers especially to those things that are the subject of political debate. Unlike in the case of medicine, people do not acknowledge any clear set of criteria for political expertise, besides perhaps 'success' for one's polity, a thing not universally agreed upon. Most people have confidence in their knowledge of the good and just alternatives available (cf. 110c-d).

Policy decisions about what are commonly termed 'value judgements' are rarely decided solely on the basis of reason. Especially in democracies, where mere whims may become commands, an appeal to irrational elements in men's souls is often more effective. Men's fears too, especially their fear of enslavement, can be manipulated for various ends. Emotional appeals to national pride, love of family and fraternity, and the possibility of accumulating wealth are what move men, for it is these to which men are attracted. Rational speech is only all-powerful if men are all-rational.

Secondly, it is not clear that a man's nobility or ignobility should be of no account in the ekklesia. At least two reasons might be adduced for this consideration. There is no necessary connection between

knowing and giving good advice. Malevolence as well as ignorance may cause it. A bad man who knows might give worse advice than an ignorant man of good will who happens to have right opinions. Unless the knower is a noble person there is no guarantee that he will tender his best advice. An ignoble man may provide advice that serves a perverse interest, and he might even do it on the basis of his expert knowledge. Another reason for considering nobility important in advisors is that it might be the best the citizens can do. Most Athenians would not believe that there are experts in knowledge about justice as there are in the crafts. If they won't grant that expertise (and there are several reasons why it would be dangerous to give them the power to judge men on that score), then it is probably best that they take their advice from a gentleman, a nobleman, or even a man whose concern for his family's honor will help to prevent his corruption.

Thirdly, since cities obviously do not succumb to fevers and bodily diseases,[79] one must in this case treat the "physician of the diseased city" metaphorically. It is not certain that the Athenians would recognize the diseased condition of a city. To the extent to which they do, they tend to regard political health in economic terms (as one speaks of a "healthy economy"). In that case, whether a man was rich or poor would make a great deal of difference to them. They wouldn't be likely to take advice on how to increase the wealth (the health) of a city from someone who could not prove his competence in that matter in his private life. In addition, since most people are importantly motivated by wealth, they will respect the opinions of one who is recognizably better at what they are themselves doing - getting wealthy. It seems to be generally the case that people will attend to

the speech of a wealthy man more than to a poorer but perhaps more virtuous man.

In other words, then, it is not clear that what Socrates has said about the Athenian choice of advisors is true (107b-c). Moreover, it is not clear that it should be true. Factors such as conventional nobility probably should play a part in the choice of councillors, even if it is basically understood in terms of being well-born. People's inability to evaluate the physicians of the city, and people's emphasis on wealth also are evidence against Socrates' claims.

Socrates wants to know what they'll be considering when Alkibiades stands forth to the Athenians. It has been established that he won't advise on writing, harping, wrestling, building or divination. Alkibiades figures he will advise them when they are considering their own affairs. Socrates, in seeming perversity, continues by asking if he means their affairs concerning ship-building and what sorts of ships they should have.[80] Since that is of course not what Alkibiades means, Socrates proposes that the reason and the only reason is that the young man doesn't understand the art of ship-building. Alkibiades agrees, but the reader need not. Socrates, by emphasizing the exclusivity of expertise through the use of so many examples, has alerted the reader, should he otherwise have missed the point, that there are many reasons for not advising about something besides ignorance.

In some matters, for example, it is hard to prove knowledge and it may not always be best to go to the effort of establishing one's claim to expertise. If the knowledgeable can perceive, say, that no harm will come the way things are proceeding, there might not be any point to claiming knowledge. Another reason for perhaps keeping silent is that

the correct view has been presented. There are thus other things with which to occupy one's time. Perhaps a major reason for keeping silent about advising on some matters is simply indifference; petty politics can be left to others. In fact there are, it would seem, quite a number of reasons for keeping silent besides ignorance. And, on the other hand, it is unlikely that someone with a keen interest would acknowledge ignorance as a sufficient condition for their silence. Many who voice their opinions on public matters do not thereby mean to implicitly claim their expertise, but only to express their interestedness.

Socrates' ship-building example has a few other interesting features. Firstly, in a strict sense what Socrates and Alkibiades agree to is wrong: knowledge of shipbuilding is not the exclusive basis for determining which ships to build. Depending on whether it is a private or public ship-building program, the passenger, pilot or politician decides. Triremes or pleasure-craft, or some other specific vessels are demanded. The ship-builder then builds it as best he can. But his building is dictated by his customers, if he is free, or his owners, if he is a slave.

The prominence of Plato's famous "ship-of-state" analogy (Republic 488a-489c) allows the reader to look metaphorically at the example of 'ship-building,' and the question of what sort of 'ships' ought to get built. In terms of the analogy, then, Socrates is asking Alkibiades if he will be giving advice on statebuilding and what kind of polis ought to be constructed. This is, it seems, the very thing upon which Alkibiades wants to advise the Athenians. He wants very much to build Athens into a super Empire. The recognition of the ship-of-state analogy brings to the surface a most fundamental political question

which lurks behind much of the discussion of the dialogue: which sort of regime ought to be constructed? The importance of the question of the best regime to political philosophy is indicated and reinforced by the very test of the importance of the question in the analogy. The consideration of what sort of ship ought to be built stands behind the whole activity of ship-building, and yet is one that is not answered by the technical expert. The user (passenger/citizen) and the ruler (pilot/statesman) are the ones that make the decision. On the basis of an example that has already been shown to be suspect, namely Socrates' mention of ship-building, the reader of the First Alkibiades is provided with the opportunity to consider the intricasies of the analogy and a question of central importance to the political man. Alkibiades must gain the ability to advise the Athenians as to what ships they ought to build.

For the moment, however, Socrates asks on what affairs Alkibiades means to give advice, and the young man answers those of war or peace or other affairs of the polis. Socrates asks for clarification on whether Alkibiades means they'll be deliberating about the manner of peace and war; will they be considering questions of on whom, how, when and how long it is better to make war (107c). But if the Athenians were to ask these sorts of questions about wrestling, Socrates remarks, they'd call not on Alkibiades but on the wrestling master, and he would answer in light of what was better.[81] Similarly, when singing and accompanying lyre-playing and dancing, some ways and times are better. Alkibiades agrees.

The word 'better' was used both in the case of harping to accompany singing[82] and in the case of wrestling (108a-b). For wrestling,

the standard of the better is provided by gymnastics; what supplies it in the case of harping? Alkibiades doesn't understand and Socrates suggests that he imitate him, for Socrates' pattern could be generalized to yield a correct answer in all cases.[83] Correctness comes into being by the art, and the art in the case of wrestling is fairly (kalos) said to be gymnastics (108c). If Alkibiades is to copy Socrates, he should copy him in fair conversation, as well, and answer in his turn what the art of harping, singing and dancing is. But Alkibiades still cannot tell him the name of the art (108c). Socrates attempts another tact and deviates slightly from the pattern he had suggested Alkibiades imitate. Presumably Alkibiades will be able to answer the questions once Socrates asks the right one. He doesn't assume that Alkibiades is ignorant of the answer, so he takes care in choosing the appropriate questions. Perhaps his next attempt will solicit the desired response. The goddesses of the art are the Muses. Alkibiades can now acknowledge that if the art is named after them, it is called 'Music.' The musical mode, as with the earlier pattern of gymnastics, will be correct when it follows the musical art. Now Socrates wants Alkibiades to say what the 'better' is in the case of making war and peace, but Alkibiades is unable.

There are a number of reasons why he would be unable on the basis of the pattern Socrates has supplied. One of these has to do with the pattern itself. It is not clear there is an art (techne), per se, of making war and peace. The closest one could come to recognizing such an art would be to suggest it is the art of politics, but even if that is properly an art (i.e., strictly a matter of technical expertise) knowing only its name would not provide a clear standard of 'better.' The term 'political' does not of its own designate a better way to wage war and

peace. Despite the possibility that the art in this case is of a higher order than music or gymnastics, it remains unclear that Alkibiades can use the same solution as Socrates suggested in the case of music. Who are the gods or goddesses who give their name to the art of war and peace? Perhaps one way to understand this curious feature of the discussion is to consider that Socrates might be suggesting that there is a divine standard for politics as well as for music.

According to Socrates, Alkibiades' inability to answer about the standard or politics is disgraceful (108e). Were Alkibiades an advisor on food, even without expert knowledge (i.e., even if he wasn't a physician), he could still say that the 'better' was the more wholesome. In this case, where he claims to have knowledge and intends to advise as though he had knowledge (notice the two are not the same), he should be ashamed to be unable to answer questions on it.

At this point the reader must pause. If Socrates simply wanted to make this point and proceed with the argument, he has chosen an unfortunate example in discussing the advisor on food. There are a number of features of his use of this example that, if transferred, have quite important repercussions for the discussion of the political advisor. Firstly, it may be remarked that Socrates has admitted that the ability to say what the 'better' is, is not always necessarily contingent upon technical knowledge. Secondly, someone who answers "more wholesome" as the better in food has already implicitly or explicitly accepted a hierarchy of values. He has architectonically structured the arts that have anything to do with food in such a manner as to place health at the apex. Someone who had not conceded such a rank-ordering might have said "cheapest," "most flavorful," or even "sweetest." Thus this example

clearly indicates the centrality of understanding the architectonic nature of politics. Thirdly, and perhaps least importantly, Socrates has more clearly indicated a distinction that was suggested in the previous example. 'It is a different matter to know that 'wholesome' food is better for one than it is to know which foods are wholesome. Socrates had, prior to this, been attempting to get Alkibiades to name the art which provides the standard of the good in peace and war. Even if Alkibiades had been able to name that art, there would have been no indication of his substantive knowledge of the art. Conversely it might be possible that he would have substantive knowledge of something without being able to refer to it as a named art.

One might account for Alkibiades' inability to name the art of political advice by reference to something other than his knowledge and ignorance. Perhaps the very subject matter would render such a statement difficult. For instance, if politics is the 'art' which structures all others, it would be with a view to politics that the respective 'betters' in the other arts would be named. The referent of politics would be of an entirely different order however. Perhaps its 'better,' the comprehensive 'better,' would be simply 'the good.' At any rate, it is a question of a different order, a different kind of question, insofar as the instrumentally good is different from the good simply. This suggestion is at least partly sustained by the observation that Socrates uses a different method to discover the answer in this case than in the previous 'patterns' supplied by wrestling and harping.

Alkibiades agrees that it does indeed seem disgraceful, but even after further consideration he cannot say what the 'better' (the aim or good providing a standard of better) is with respect to peace and war.

As Socrates' question about the goddesses of harping deviated from the example of wrestling, so Socrates' attempt here is a deviation. He asks Alkibiades what people say they suffer in war and what they call it. The reader might note peace has been omitted from consideration. Alkibiades says that what is suffered is deceit, force and robbery (109b), and that such are suffered in either a just or an unjust way. Now it is clearer why 'peace' was not mentioned. It might be more difficult to argue in parallel fashion that the most important distinction in peace was between just peace and unjust peace.

Socrates asks if it is upon the just or the unjust that Alkibiades will advise the Athenians to make war. Alkibiades immediately recognizes at least one difficulty. If for some reason it would be necessary to go to war with those who are just, the advisor would not say so. That is the case not only because it is considered unlawful, but, as Alkibiades adds, it is not considered noble either. Socrates assumes Alkibiades will appeal to these things[84] when addressing the ekklesia. Alkibiades here proves he understands the need for speaking differently to the public, or at least for remaining prudently silent about certain matters.

Within the bounds of the argument to this point, wealth and prestige (not to mention dire necessity) may be 'betters' in wars as readily as justice.[85] One may only confidently infer two things from Alkibiades' admissions. The people listening to the advice cannot be told that those warred upon are just; and to tell them so would be unlawful and ignoble. One might be curious as to the proper relation between lawfulness, nobility and justice, and the reader of the dialogue, in sorting out these considerations, might examine the argument surrounding this statement of their relation.

The next few discussions in the First Alkibiades seem to focus on establishing Alkibiades' claim to knowledge about justice. Either Alkibiades has not noticed his own ignorance in this matter or Socrates has not observed his learning and taking lessons on justice. Socrates would like to know, and he swears by the god of friendship that he is not joking, who the man was who taught Alkibiades about justice.

Alkibiades wants to know whether he couldn't have learned it another way. Socrates answers that Alkibiades could have learned it through his own discovery. Alkibiades, in a dazzling display of quick answers, responds that he might have discovered it if he'd inquired, and he might have inquired if there was a time when he thought he did not know. Socrates says that Alkibiades has spoken well (110a), but he wants to know when that time was. Socrates seems to acknowledge Alkibiades' skill in speaking. These formally sharp answers would probably be the kind praised in question and answer games. Socrates says Alkibiades has spoken well, but immediately instructs Alkibiades about how to speak in response to the next question. Alkibiades is to speak the truth; the dialogue would be futile if he didn't answer truly. So here it is acknowledged that truth (at least for the sake of useful dialogue) is the standard for speaking well. He quickly follows the insincere praise with an indication of the real criteria for determining if something was well-spoken. Socrates is not destroying Alkibiades' notion of his ability to achieve ideals, he is instead destroying the ideals. He acknowledged Alkibiades' skill and then suggests it is not a good skill to have. Socrates, in effect, tells Alkibiades to forget the clever answers and to speak the truth. One of the themes of Socrates' instruction of the youth seems to be the teaching of proper

goals or standards.

Alkibiades admits that a year ago he thought he knew justice and injustice, and two, three and four years ago as well. Socrates remarks that before that Alkibiades was a child and Socrates knows well enough that even then the precocious child thought he knew. The philosopher had often heard Alkibiades as a boy claim that a playmate cheated during a game, and so labelled him unjust with perfect confidence (110b). Alkibiades concedes that Socrates speaks the truth but asks what else should he have done when someone cheated him? Socrates points out that this very question indicates Alkibiades' belief that he knows the answer. If he recognized his ignorance, Socrates responds, he would not ask what else he should have done as though there was no alternative.

Alkibiades swears that he must not have been ignorant because he clearly perceived that he was wronged. If this implies that, as a child, he thought he knew justice and injustice, then so he must. And he admits he couldn't have discovered it while he thought he knew it (110c). Socrates suggests to Alkibiades that he won't be able to cite a time when he thought he didn't know, and Alkibiades swears again that he cannot. Apparently, then, he must conclude that he cannot know the just on the basis of discovery (110d).

This argument appears to depend on the premise that one begins at a loss, completely ignorant, and then one subsequently discovers what justice is. But such an assumption is surely unwarranted. The discovery could be a slow, gradual process of continual refinement of a child's understanding of justice. Often one's opinions are changed because one discovers something that doesn't square with previous beliefs. If one is sufficiently confident of the new factor, one's beliefs may change.

During the course of the succeeding dialogue, the reader may see a number of ways in which this procedure might take place in a person's life.

Socrates draws to Alkibiades' attention that if he doesn't know justice by his own discovery, and didn't learn it from others, how could he know it. Alkibiades suggests that perhaps he said the wrong thing before and that he did in fact learn it, in the same way as everyone else. It is not clear that this is a sincere move on Alkibiades' part (though it proves later in the dialogue to have support as being the actual account of the origin of most people's views of justice). Perhaps in order to win the argument he is willing to simply change the premises. Unfortunately, his changing of this one entirely removes the need for the argument. Socrates doesn't bother to point out to Alkibiades that if everybody knows it, and in the same way, then Alkibiades has no claim to special expertise, and so no basis for presuming to advise the Athenians. Alkibiades' abilities in speaking have been demonstrated, a care and willingness to learn from dialogue have yet to be instilled.[86]

As is presently indicated to Alkibiades, his answer brings about a return to the same problem - from whom did he learn it? To his reply that the many taught him (110e), Socrates responds that they are not worthy teachers in whom he is taking refuge.[87] They are not competent to teach how to play and how not to play draughts[88] and since that is insignificant compared to justice, how can they teach the more serious matter? Alkibiades perceptively counters this by pointing out that they can teach things more worthy than draughts; it was they and no single master who taught Alkibiades to speak Greek.

Alkibiades by this point proves that he is capable of quick and independent thought. He doesn't merely follow Socrates' lead in answering but in fact points out an important example to the contrary. The Greek language is taught by the many quite capably even though they cannot teach the less important draughts nor many other peculiar skills. A number of issues important to the discussion are brought to the surface by this example. First, one should notice that language is another thing Alkibiades has learned which Socrates didn't mention. Language is necessary for learning most other subjects, and one can learn quite a lot by just listening to people speaking. A common language is the precondition of the conversation depicted in the First Alkibiades, as is some general agreement, however superficial, between Socrates and Alkibiades as to what they mean when they say 'justice.' In order to have an argument over whether or not one of them is indeed knowledgeable about justice and injustice, they must have some notion of what 'justice' conventionally means. They are not talking about the height of the sky, the price of gold, or the climate on mountaintops. Justice (dikaios) is a word in the Greek language. Most people share sufficient agreement about its meaning so as to be able to teach people how the word should be used. This conventional notion of justice thus informs a child's sense of justice, and as is shown by the strategy of the Republic as well as of the First Alkibiades, the conventional opinions about justice must be dealt with and accounted for in any more philosophic treatment.

One must assume that conventional opinions about justice have some connection, however tenuous, with the truth about it. This exemplifies the peculiar nature of 'agreement' as a criterion of knowledge. That experts agree about their subject matter is not altogether beside

the point, but too much emphasis should not be placed upon it. There are innumerable examples of "sectarian" agreements, none of which by that fact have any claim to truth. There is also considerable agreement in conventional opinions and the "world-views" of various communities which must be accounted for but not necessarily accepted.

Socrates admits to Alkibiades (whom he chooses to address, at this moment, as "well-born," perhaps in order to remind him that he distinguishes himself from the many) that the people can be justly praised for teaching such things as language, for they are properly equipped (and actually the many do not teach one how to use language well). To teach, one ought to know, and an indication of their knowing is that they agree among each other on the language. If they disagreed they couldn't be said to know and wouldn't be able to teach. One might parenthetically point to some other important things that the many teach. Children learn the laws from the many, including the laws/rules of games. To call someone a cheater (110b) does not mean someone knows justice; they simply must know the rules of the game and be able to recognize when such rules have been violated. Rules of games are strictly conventional. They gain their force from an agreement, implicit or explicit, between the players. One might wonder if justice is, correspondingly, the rules of a supergame, or if it is something standing behind all rule-obeying.

The many agree on what stone and wood are. If one were to say "stone" or "wood," they could all reach for the same thing. That is what Alkibiades must mean by saying that all his fellow citizens have knowledge of Greek. And they are good teachers in as much as they agree on these terms in public and private. Poleis also agree among each other (111b, 118d, 126c-e; cf. Lakhes 186d). Anyone who wanted to learn what stone

and wood were would be rightly sent to the many.

The fact that Greeks agree with each other when they name objects hardly accounts for their knowledge of the language, much less their ability to teach it. Naming is far from being the bulk of speaking a language, (Hobbes and Scripture to the contrary notwithstanding[89]). Not only is it improper to consider many parts of speech as having the function of designating things, but even descriptive reference to the sensible world is only a partial aspect of the use of language. To mention only a few everyday aspects of language that do not obviously conform, consider the varied use of commands, metaphors, fables, poetry and exclamation. To suggest that what constitutes one's knowledge of a language is to point to objects and use nouns to name them, would be completely inadequate. It would be so radically insufficient, in fact, that it could not even account for its own articulation.

Language consists of much more than statements which correspond to observables in the actual world. But even were one to restrict one's examination of language to understanding what words mean, or refer to, one would immediately run into difficulties. All sorts of words are used in everyday language which demand some measure of evaluation on the part of the user and the listener. A dog may be pointed to and called "dog." A more involved judgement is required in calling it a "wild dog," or "wolf," not to say a "bad dog." Agreement or disagreement on the use of such terms does not depend on knowledge of the language as much as on the character of the thing in question.

There are problems even with Socrates' account of naming. One cannot be certain that the essence of a thing has been focussed upon by those giving the name to the thing. One might fasten upon the material,

or the form, or yet some other feature of the object. For example, a piece of petrified wood, or a stone carving of a tree would significantly complicate Socrates' simple example. It is not at all clear that the same thing would be pointed to if someone said "stone." The reader may remember that the prisoners in the cave of the Republic spend quite a bit of their time naming the shadows on the wall of the cave (Republic 515b, 516c). The close connection between this discussion and that of the Republic is indicated also by the fact that the objects which cast the shadows in the cave are made of stone and wood (Republic 515a.1). People in the cave don't even look at the objects when they name things. According to the analogy of the cave they would be the people teaching Alkibiades to speak Greek; they are the people in actual cities. And what they call "stone" and "wood" are only an aspect of stone and wood, the shadowy representations of stone and wood. If the essences of stone and wood, comparatively simple things, are not denoted by language, one can imagine in what the agreement might consist in the popular use of words like "City" and "Man." The question of the relation of a name to the essential aspect of the thing adds a significant dimension to the philosophic understanding of the human use of language.

Alkibiades and Socrates seem to be content with this analysis of naming, however, and Socrates readily proceeds to the next point in the argument. If one wanted to know not only what a man or a horse (note the significance of the change from stone and wood) was, but which was a good runner, the many would not be able to teach that - proof of which is their disagreement among themselves. Apparently finding this example insufficient, Socrates adds that should one want to know which men were healthy and which were diseased, the many would also not be able to

teach that, for they disagree (111e).

Notice two features of these examples that may be of philosophic interest. To begin with, the respective experts are, first the gymnastics trainer and second, the physician.[90] In this dialogue, both the gymnastics expert and the doctor have arguments advanced on their behalf, supporting their claim to be the proper controllers of, or experts about, the whole body (126a-b, 128c). As supreme rulers of the technae of the body they have different aspects of the good condition in mind and consequently might give different advice (for example on matters of diet). Thereupon one is confronted with the standard problem of trying to maintain two or more supreme authorities: which one is really the proper ruler in the event of conflict.

There is yet another aspect of the same problem that is of some concern to the reader of the First Alkibiades. One might say that the relation of the body to the soul is a very persuasive issue in this dialogue, and the suggestion that there are two leaders in matters of the body causes one to wonder whether there is a corresponding dual leadership in the soul.

Secondly, the reader notices that the composition of "the many" shifts on the basis of what is being taught. On the one hand, the doctor fits into "the many" as being unable to tell the good runner; on the other hand, when the focus is on health, all but the doctor appear to constitute "the many."

The question of how to understand the make-up of the many points to a very large issue area in philosophy, namely that which is popularly termed the 'holism vs. individualism debate,' or more generally, the question of the composition and character of groups. What essentially

characterizes groups - in particular that politically indispensible group, "the many?" This issue is not superfluous to this dialogue, nor to this portion of this dialogue. By placing the doctor alone against the many (in the second example), one unwittingly contradicts oneself. Alkibiades and Socrates fall among the ranks of the Many as well as the Few.

Perhaps the most obvious problem connected with determining the composition of the group, "the many," is brought into focus when one tries to discover how one "goes to the many" to learn (111d). There are quite a few possibilities. Does the opinion of "the many" become the average (mean) opinion of all the different views prevalent in a city? Or is it the opinion held by the majority? One might go to each individual, to each of a variety of representative individuals, or even to 51% of the individuals in a given place, and then statistically evaluate their opinions, arriving at one or another form of majority consensus. Or, one might determine conventional opinion by asking various individuals what they believe everyone else believes.[91] There seem to be countless ways of understanding "the many," each of which allows for quite different outcomes. The problems for the student of political affairs, as well as for the aspiring politician, are compounded because the many do not appear to hold a single view unanimously or unambiguously on many of the important questions.

Regardless of which is the appropriate understanding of "the many," the reader must at all events remember that "the many" and "the few" are a perennial political division. There are, likewise, several ways in which "the few" are conceived. Some consider them to be the men of wealth, the men of virtue, the men of intelligence, and so on. Reference

to "the few," however, is rarely so vague as reference to the many, since people who speak of "the few" are usually aware of which criteria form the bases of the distinction. Despite the lack of clarity concerning the division between "the many" and "the few," it is appealed to, in most regimes as being a fundamental schizm. Most regimes, it may be ventured, are in fact based either upon the distinction, or upon trying to remove the distinction, and they appeal to this division, however vague, to legitimate themselves.

At this point in the discussion of the First Alkibiades (111e), Alkibiades and Socrates are considering whether the many are capable teachers of justice. They appear to be making their judgement solely on the basis of the criterion of agreement. One might stop to consider not only whether agreement is sufficient to indicate knowledge, but indeed whether it is even necessary. One cannot simply deny the possibility that one might be able to gain knowledge because of disagreements. Profound differences of opinion might indicate the best way of learning the truth, as, for example the disagreements among philosophers about justice teaches at the very least what the important considerations might be.

Socrates continues. Since disagreement among the many indicates that they are not able to teach (though lack of ability rarely prevents them from trying anyway, cf. Apology 24c-25a; Gorgias 461c), Socrates asks Alkibiades whether the many agree about justice and injustice, or if indeed they don't differ most on those very concerns. People do not fight and kill in battle because they disagree on questions of health,[92] but when justice is in dispute, Alkibiades has seen the battles. And if he hasn't seen them (Socrates should know this, after all, cf. 106e) he

has heard of the fights from many, particularly from Homer, because he's heard the Odyssey and Iliad.

Alkibiades' familiarity with Homer is of great significance. It, along with his knoweldge of Greek, are probably the two most crucial "oversights" in Socrates' list of what Alkibiades learned. In fact, they are of such importance that they overshadow the subjects in which he did take lessons, in terms of their effect on his character development, his common-sense understanding, and on his suitability for political office. Homer is an important source of knowledge and of opinion, and is responsible for there being considerable consensus of belief among the Greeks in many matters. He provides the authoritative interpretation of the gods as well as of the qualities and actions of great men. If Alkibiades knows Homer and if he knows that Homer is about justice, then he has learned much more about justice than one would surmise on the basis of his formal schooling.

Alkibiades agrees with Socrates' remark that the Iliad and Odyssey are about disagreements about justice and injustice. He also accepts the interpretation that a difference of opinion about the just and the unjust caused the battles and deaths of the Akhaians and Trojans; the dispute between Odysseus and Penelope's suitors; and the deaths and fights of the Athenians, Spartans and Boiotians at Tanagra and Koroneia. (One notes that Socrates has blended the fabulous with the actual, and has chosen, as his non-mythic example, probably the one over which it is most difficult for Alkibiades to be non-partisan - the battle in which his father died. This also raises his heritage to the level of the epic.) The reader need not agree with this interpretation on a number of counts. Firstly, the central case is noteworthy in that Socrates

interprets Odysseus' strife with the men of Ithaka to be over a woman, and not primarily the kingdom and palace. It is not at all clear, moreover, that what caused the altercation between Odysseus and the suitors was a difference of opinion about justice. They might have all wanted the same thing, but the reaction of the suitors at Odysseus' return indicates that they didn't feel they were in the right - they admitted guilt.[93] Secondly, what is noticeable in Homer is that only one aspect of the epic is about the dispute about justice (and also, both Homeric examples involve a conflict between eros and justice, represented by Helen and Penelope). In the epics the disagreement among the many refers not to the many of one polis but of various poleis against each other. Indeed the many of each polis in the Trojan war agree.

These observations foreshadow the discussion that will presently come to the fore in the dialogue under somewhat different circumstances. The problem of the difference between the just and the expedient is a key one in political philosophy, and it is introduced by the reflection that in a number of instances disagreement does not focus on what the just solution is, but on who should be the victor, who will control the thing over which the sides are disputing. Both sides agree that it would be good to control one thing. More shall be said about this later in the context of the discussion.

Socrates inquires of Alkibiades whether the people involved in those wars could be said to understand these questions if they could disagree so strongly as to take extreme measures. Though he must admit that teachers of that sort are ignorant, Alkibiades had nevertheless referred Socrates to them. Alkibiades is quite unaware of the nature of justice and injustice and he also cannot point to a teacher or say when he discovered them. It thus seems hard to say he has knowledge of them.

Alkibiades agrees that according to what Socrates has said it is not likely that he knows (112d). Socrates takes this opportunity to teach Alkibiades a most important lesson. Though apparently a digression, it will mark a pivotal point in the turning around of Alkibiades that occurs by the middle of the discussion.

Socrates says that Alkibiades' last remark was not fair (kalos) because he claimed Socrates said that Alkibiades was ignorant, whereas actually Alkibiades did. Alkibiades is astounded. Did he say it? Socrates is teaching Alkibiades that the words spoken in an argument ought indeed to have an effect on one's life, that the outcomes of arguments are impersonal yet must be taken seriously, and that responsibility for what is said rests with both partners in dialogue. The results of rational speech are to be trusted; reason is a kind of power necessarily determining things. Alkibiades cannot agree in speech and then decide, if it is convenient, to dismiss conclusions on the grounds that it was someone else who said it. Arguments attain much more significance when they are recognized as one's own. One must learn they are not merely playthings (cf. Republic 539b). Accepting responsibility for them and their conclusions is essential. It is important politically with reference to speech, as well as in the more generally recognized sense of assuming responsibility for one's actions. To cite an instance of special importance to this dialogue, who is responsible for Alkibiades - Perikles? Athens? Socrates? Alkibiades himself? One can often place responsibility for one's actions on one's society, one's immediate environment, or one's teachers. Perhaps it is not so easy to shun responsibility for conclusions of arguments. Most men desire consistency and at least feel uneasy when they are shown to be involved in

contradictions. In this discussion of who must accept responsibility for the conclusions of rational discourse, Alkibiades learns yet another lesson about the power of speech. He has, by his own tongue, convicted himself of ignorance.

Socrates demonstrates to Alkibiades that if he asks whether one or two is the larger number, and Alkibiades answers that two is greater by one, it was Alkibiades who said that two was greater than one. Socrates had asked and Alkibiades had answered; the answer was the speaker. Similarly, if Socrates should ask which letters are in "Socrates" and Alkibiades answered, Alkibiades would be the speaker. On the basis of this the young man agrees that, as a principle, whenever there is a questioner and an answerer, the speaker is the answerer. Since so far Socrates had been the questioner and Alkibiades the answerer, Alkibiades is responsible for whatever has been uttered.

What has been disclosed by now is that Alkibiades, the noble son of Kleinias, intends to go to the ekklesia to advise on that of which he knows nothing. Socrates quotes Euripides - Alkibiades "hear it from [himself] not me."[94] Socrates doesn't pull any punches. Not only does he refer to an almost incestuous woman to speak of Alkibiades' condition, but he follows with what must seem a painfully sarcastic form of address (since it is actually ironic) which the young man would probably wish to hear from serious lips. Alkibiades, the "best of men,' is contemplating a mad undertaking in teaching what he has not bothered to learn.

Alkibiades has been hit, but not hard enough for him to change his mind instead of the topic. He thinks that Athenians and the other Greeks don't, in fact, deliberate over the justice of a course of action - they consider that to be more or less obvious - but about its advantageousness

(113d). The just and the advantageous are not the same, for great injustices have proven advantageous, and sometimes little advantage has been gained from just action. Socrates announces that he will challenge Alkibiades' knowledge of what is expedient, even if he should grant that the just and the advantageous are ever so distinct (113e).

Alkibiades perceives no hindrance to his claiming to know what is advantageous unless Socrates is again about to ask from which teacher he learned it or how he discovered it. Hereupon Socrates remarks that the young man is treating arguments as though they were clothing which, once worn, is dirtied. Socrates will ignore these notions of Alkibiades, implying that they involve an incorrect understanding of philosophic disputation. Alkibiades must be taught that what is ever correct according to reason remains correct according to reason. Variety in arguments is not a criterion affecting their rational consistency. Socrates shall proceed by asking the same question, intending it to, in effect, ask the whole argument. He claims to be certain that Alkibiades will find himself in the same difficulty with this argument.

The reader will recognize that Alkibiades is not likely to encounter precisely the same problems with this new argument. The nature of the agreement and disagreement by individuals and states over the matter of usefulness or advantageousness is different than that concerning justice. A man may know it would be useful to have something, or expedient to do something, and also know it to be unjust. States, too, may agree on something's advantageousness, say controlling the Hellespont but they may disagree on who should control it. The conflict in these cases is not the result of a disagreement as to what is true (e.g., it is true that each country's interests are better served by control of

key sea routes), but it is based precisely on their agreement about the truth regarding expediency. When states and individuals are primarily concerned with wealth, then knowing what is useful presents far fewer problems than knowing what is just.

Since Alkibiades is so squeamish as to dislike the flavor of old arguments, Socrates will disregard his inability to corroborate his claim to knowledge of the expedient. Instead he will ask whether the just and the useful are the same or different. Alkibiades can question Socrates as he had been questioned, or he can choose whatever form of discourse he likes. As he feels incapable of convincing Socrates, Alkibiades is invited to imagine Socrates to be the people of the ekklesia; even there, where the young man is eager to speak, he will have to persuade each man singly (114b). A knowledgeable man can persuade one alone and many together (114b-c). A writing master is able to persuade either one or many about letters and likewise an arithmetician influences one man or many about numbers.

For quite a few reasons the reader might object to Socrates' inference from these examples to the arena of politics. Firstly, they are not the kinds of things discussed in politics, and one might suspect that the "persuasion" involved is not of the same variety. Proof of this might be offered in the form of the observation that the inability to persuade in politics does not necessarily imply the dull-wittedness of the audience. Strong passions bar the way for reason in politics like they rarely do in numbers and letters. This leads to the second objection. Not only is knowledge of grammar and arithmetic fundamentally different than politics, but they represent extreme examples in themselves. They correspond to two very diverse criteria of knowledge both

of which have been previously introduced in the dialogue. The subject matter of letters is decided upon almost exclusively by agreement; that of numbers is learned most importantly through discovery, and this does not depend on people's agreement (cf. 112e-113a, 126c; and 106e reminds one that Alkibiades has taken lessons only in one of these).

Presumably, however, if the arithmetician and grammarian can, then Alkibiades also will be able to persuade one man or many about that which he knows. Apparently the only difference between the rhetorician in front of a crowd and a man engaged in dialogue is that the rhetorician persuades everyone at once, the latter one at a time. Given that the same man persuades either a multitude or an individual, Socrates invites Alkibiades to practice on him to show that the just is not the expedient. (Ironically, there may be no one Alkibiades ever meets who is further from the multitude).

If it weren't for his earlier statement (109c) where he indicated his recognition of the difference between private and public speech, it would appear that Alkibiades had quite a lot to learn before he confronted the ekklesia. One might readily propose that there is indeed very little similarity between persuading one and persuading the multitude. In a dialogue one man can ask questions that reveal the other's ignorance; Socrates does this to Alkibiades in this dialogue, he might not in public (118b). In a dialogue, there needn't always be public pressure with which to contend (an important exception being courtroom dialogue); a public speech, especially one addressing the ekklesia must yield to or otherwise take into account the strength of the many. Often when addressing a crowd one only has to address the influential. At other times one need only appeal to the least common denominator. There are factors at work in crowds which affect reactions to a speaker, factors which do not seem to

be present in one-to-one dialogue. When addressing a multitude, a speaker must be aware of the general feelings and sentiments of the group, and address himself to them. When in dialogue he can tailor his comments to one man's specific interests. To convince the individual, however, he will have to be precisely right in his deduction of the individual's sentiments - in a crowd a more general understanding is usually sufficient. Mere hints at a subject will be successful; when addressing a multitude with regard to a policy, a rhetorician will not be taken to task for every claim he makes. If his general policy is pleasing to the many, it is unlikely that they will critically examine all of his reasons for proposing the policy. Also, when speaking to a crowd, one is not expected to prove one's technical expertise. An individual may be able to discover the limits of one's knowledge; a crowd will rarely ask. This whola analysis, however, is rendered questionable by the ambiguity of the composition of "the many," discussed above. One could, for example, come across a very knowledgeable crowd, or a stupid individual and many of the above observations would not hold. However, the situations most directly relevant to the dialogue involve rhetoric toward a crowd such as that of the ekklesia, and thoughtful dialogue between individuals such as Alkibiades and Socrates.

If Alkibiades ever intends to set forth a plan of action to the Athenians, the adoption of his proposal will depend on his convincing them in the ekklesia. The ability to persuade the multitude attains great political significance; and especially in democracies, a man's ability in speaking is often the foundation of his power.

Once recognized, this power is susceptible to cultivation. Rhetoric, the art of persuasive speech, is the art which provides the

knowledge requisite to gain effective power over an audience. All political men are aware of rhetoric; their rhetorical ability to a large extent determines their success or failure.[95] Of course, there are at least two important qualifications or limits on the power of even the most persuasive speech. The first limit is knowledge. A man who knows grammar and arithmetic will not be swayed wrongly about numbers, when they are used in any of the conventional ways. That an able rhetorician escape detection in a lie is a necessity if he is to be successful among those knowledgeable in the topic he addresses. Presumably those who possess only beliefs about the matter would be more readily seduced to embrace a false opinion.

The second limit is more troubling. It is the problem of those who simply are not convinced by argument. They distrust the spoken word. These seem to fall into three categories. The first is exemplified in the character of Kallikles in the Gorgias. It primarily includes those who are unwilling to connect the conclusions of arguments to their own lives. They may agree to something in argument and, moments later, do something quite contrary to their conclusions. This characteristic is well-displayed in Kallikles who, when driven to a contradiction doesn't even care.[96] He holds two conflicting opinions and holds them so strongly that he doesn't even care that they support conclusions that are contrary to reason and yield contrary results. Kallikles is unwilling to continue discussing with Socrates (Gorgias 505c. 1-e.1; 506 c.5; 519d); he does not want to learn from rational speech. He remains unconvinced by Socrates' argument and by his rhetoric (Gorgias 511a. 3-5; 513c.5; 516b-d; 519d-522e). If Socrates is to rule Kallikles, he will need more than reason and wisdom and beautiful speech (Gorgias 523a-527e); he will need some

kind of coercive power.[97]

Secondly, almost all people have some experience of those who inconsistently maintain in speech what they do not uphold in deed. This is the most immediate level on which to recognize the problem of the relation of theory to practice. Alkibiades seems to have this opinion of speech at the beginning of the dialogue, for he can admit almost anything in speech (106c.2). Two things, however, show that he is far above it. He implicitly recognizes that the realm of speech is the realm within which he must confront Socrates, and he has a desire for consistency. Kallikles is too dogmatic to even recognize his inconsistency. But when Socrates forces Alkibiades to take responsibility for all the conclusions they have reached to that point (112e. 5ff.), he realizes he must have made an error either in his premises or his argument. This marks the first and major turning around of Alkibiades. He recognizes that he has said he is ignorant.

A third type of person who is not convinced by rhetoricians is the one who distrusts argument because he recognizes the skill involved in speaking. Not because he is indifferent to the compulsion of reason but precisely because he wants to act according to reason, he desires to be certain of not being tricked. (Most people are also familiar with the feeling that something vaguely suspicious is going on in a discussion.) He is convinced that there are men - e.g., sophists - who are skilled at the game of question and answer and can make anyone look like a fool. And so what? He is not at all moved by their victory in speech. Something other than rational speech is needed to convince him. Indeed, this is one of the most difficult challenges Socrates meets in the Republic, and indicates a higher level of the theory/practice relationship.

Adeimantos is not convinced by mere words. He has to be shown that philosophy is useful to the city, among other things (Republic 487b.1-d.5; 498c.5 ff; 367d.9-e.5; 367b.3; 389a.10). Although he is distrustful of mere speech, he learns to respect it as a medium through which to understand the political. He has the example of Socrates whose life matches, or is even guided by, his speech. Socrates' difficulty lies in making the case in speech to this man who does not put full stock in the conclusions of speech. One must wonder, moreover, what kinds of deeds will suffice for those others who cannot even view Socrates. This is the problem faced by all writers who want to reach this sort of person. Perhaps one might consider very clever speakers like Plato to be performing the deed of making the words of a Socrates appear like the deeds of Socrates, in the speech of the Dialogues. Almost paradoxically, they must convince through speech that speech isn't "mere talk."

Alkibiades charges Socrates with hybris and Socrates acknowledges it for the time being, for he intends to prove to Alkibiades the opposite view, namely that the just is the expedient (114d). Socrates doesn't deny the charge, or even, as one might expect, playfully redirect it as might be appropriate; the accusation is made by a man who, not much later, will be considered hybristic by almost the entire Athenian public. It is not clear precisely what is hybristic about Socrates' last remarks. Hybris is a pride or ambition or insolence inappropriate to men. Perhaps both men are hybristic as charged; in this instance it is not imperative that they defend themselves for they are alone. Possibly anyone who seeks total power as does Alkibiades, or wisdom like Socrates, is too ambitious and too haughty. They would be vying with the gods to the extent that they challenge civic piety and the supremacy of the deities

of the polis. One wants to rule the universe like a god, the other to know it like a god.

The charge of hybris has been introduced in the context of persuading through speech. Allegedly the person who knows will have the power to persuade through speech. This is itself rather a problematic claim as it implies all failure to persuade is an indication of ignorance. However questionable the assertion, though, the connection it recalls between these three important aspects of man's life - knowledge, power and language - is too thoroughly elaborated to be mere coincidence. It is very likely that the reader's understanding of these two exceptional men and the appropriateness of the charge of hybris will have something to do with language's relation to knowledge and power.

Alkibiades asks Socrates to speak (114d), if he intends to demonstrate to Alkibiades that the just is not distinct from the advantageous. Not inclined to answer any questions (cf. 106b), Alkibiades wishes Socrates to speak alone. Socrates, pretending incredulity, asks if indeed Alkibiades doesn't desire most of all to be persuaded and Alkibiades, playing along, agrees that he certainly does. Socrates suggests that the surest indication of persuasion is freely assenting, and if Alkibiades responds to the questions asked of him, he will most assuredly hear himself affirm that the just is indeed the advantageous. Socrates goes so far as to promise Alkibiades that if he doesn't say it, he never need trust anybody's speech again.

This astonishingly extravagant declaration by Socrates bespeaks certain knowledge on his part. Socrates implies he is confident of one of two things. Perhaps he knows that the just is advantageous, or the true relationship between the two, and thus argues for the proof of the

claim that anyone who knows can persuade. (The immense difficulties with this have already been suggested.) What is more likely, however, is that he does not think the just is identical to the advantageous, but he knows he can win the argument with Alkibiades and drive him to assert whatever conclusion he wants (that he could in effect make the weaker argument appear the stronger). If the latter is true, the reader is reminded of the power of speech and the possible dangers that can arise from its use. He will also wonder if Socrates is quite right in his proposal that Alkibiades need never trust anyone's speech if he cannot be made to agree. It seems to be more indicative of the untrustworthiness of speech if Alkibiades should agree, not that he refuse to agree. However, the reader has been placed in the enviable position of being able to judge for himself, through a careful review of the argument. His personal participation, to the limit of his ability, is after all the only means through which he can be certain that he isn't being duped into believing something instead of knowing it.

Alkibiades doubts he will admit the point, but agrees to comply, confident that no harm will attend his answers. Whereupon Socrates claims that Alkibiades speaks like a diviner (cf. 127e, 107b, 117b), and proceeds, presuming to be articulating Alkibiades' actual opinion.

Some just things are advantageous and some are not (115a). Some just things are noble and some are not. Nothing can be both base and just, so all just things are noble. Some noble things might be evil and some base things may be good, for a rescue is invested with nobility on account of courage, and with evil because of the deaths and wounds. However, since courage and death are distinct, it is with respect to separate aspects that the rescue can be said to be both noble and evil.

Insofar as it is noble it is good, and it is noble because of courage. Cowardice is an evil on par with (or worse than, 115d) death. Courage ranks among the best things and death among the worst. The rescue is deemed noble because it is the working of good by courage, and evil because it is the working of evil by death. Things are evil because of the evil produced and good on account of the good that results. In as much as a thing is good it is noble and base inasmuch as it is evil. To designate the rescue as noble but evil is thus to term it good but evil (116a). In so far as something is noble it is not evil, and neither is anything good in so far as it is base. Whoever does nobly does well and whoever does well is happy (116b). People are made happy through the acquisition of good things. They obtain good things by doing well and nobly. Accordingly, doing well is good and faring well is noble. The noble and good are the same. By this argument all that is noble is good. Good things are expedient (116c) and as has already been admitted, those who do just things do noble things (115a); those who do noble things do good things (116a). If good things are expedient then just things are expedient.

As Socrates points out, it is apparently Alkibiades who has asserted all of this. Since he argues that the just and the expedient are the same, he could hardly do other than ridicule anyone who rose up to advise the Athenians or the Peparathians believing he knew the just and the unjust and claiming that just things are sometimes evil.

Before proceeding, the reader must pause and attempt to determine the significance of the problem of the just versus the expedient. No intimate familiarity with the tradition of political philosophy is required in order to observe that the issue is dominant throughout the

tradition, perhaps most notably among the moderns in the writings of Machiavelli and Hobbes who linked the question of justice and expediency to the distinction between serving another's interest and serving one's own interest. They, and subsequent moderns, in the spirit of the "Enlightenment," then proceed with the intention of eradicating the distinction. Self-interest, properly understood, is right and is the proper basis for all human actions. Not only is there a widespread connection between the issue, the traditional treatment of the issue, and human action - but the reader might recall that the ancient philosophers, too, considered it fundamental. One need only realize that the philosophic work par excellence, Plato's Republic, receives its impetus from this consideration. The discussion of the best regime (perhaps the topic of political philosophy) arises because of Glaukon's challenging reformulation of Thrasymakhos' opinion that justice is the advantage of the stronger. Recognition of this fact sufficiently corroborates the view that this issue warrants careful scrutiny by serious students of political philosophy. Socrates has chosen this topic as the one on which to demonstrate the internal conflicts in Alkibiades' soul. Perhaps that is a subtle indication to the reader as to where he might focus when he begins the search for self-knowledge, the inevitable prerequisite for his improvement.

Alkibiades swears by all the gods. He is overwhelmed. Alkibiades protests that he isn't sure he knows even what he is saying; he continually changes his views under Socrates' questioning. Socrates points out to him that he must be unaware of what such a condition of perplexity signifies. If someone were to ask him whether he had two or three eyes, or two or four hands, he would probably respond consistently because he

knows the answer. If he voluntarily gives contradictory replies, they must concern things about which he is ignorant. Alkibiades admits it is likely; but there are probably other reasons why one might give contradictory answers, just as one might intentionally appear to err - in speech speech.

Alkibiades' ignorance with regard to justice, injustice, noble, base, evil and good is the cause of his confusion about them. Whenever a man does not know a thing, his soul is confused about that thing.

By Zeus (fittingly), Alkibiades concedes he is ignorant of how to rise into heaven. There is no confusion in his opinion about that simply because he is aware that he doesn't know. Alkibiades must take his part in discerning Socrates' meaning. He knows he is ignorant about fancy cookery, so he doesn't get confused, but entrusts it to a cook. Similarly when aboard ship he knows he is ignorant of how to steer, and leaves it to the pilot. Mistakes are made when one thinks one knows though one doesn't. Otherwise people would leave the job to those who do know. The ignorant person who knows he is ignorant doesn't make mistakes (117e). Those who make mistakes are those who think they know when they don't; those who know act rightly; those who don't, leave it to others.

All this is not precisely true for a number of reasons. Chance or fortune always plays a part and something unexpected could interfere in otherwise correctly laid plans. Also, as any honest politician or general would have to say, sometimes courses of action must be decided and acted upon, even when one is fully cognizant of one's partial ignorance.

The worst sort of stupidity, Socrates testifies is the stupidity

conjoined with confidence. It is a cause of evils and the most pernicious evils occur through its involvement with great matters like the just, the noble, the good and the advantageous. Alkibiades' bewilderment regarding these momentous matters, coupled with his ignorance of his very ignorance, imputes to him a rather sorry condition. Alkibiades admits he is afraid so.

Socrates at this point (118b) makes clear to Alkibiades the nature of his predicament. He utters an exclamation at the plight of the young man and deigns to give it a name only because they are alone. Alkibiades, according to his own confession, is attached to the most shameful kind of stupidity. Perhaps to contrast Alkibiades' actual condition with what he could be, Socrates chooses precisely this moment to refer to Alkibiades as "best of men" (cf. also 113c). With such apparent sarcasm still reverberating in the background, Socrates intimates that because of this kind of ignorance he is eager to enter politics before learning of it. Alkibiades, far from being alone, shares this lot with most politicians except, perhaps, his guardian Perikles, and a few others.

Already recognized to be obviously a salient feature of the action of the dialogue, the fact that the two are alone, engaged in a private conversation, is further stressed here as the reader approaches the central teaching of the First Alkibiades. Alkibiades has been turned around and now faces Socrates. They can confide in each other even to the extent of criticizing all or nearly all of Athens' politicians. They shall, in the next while, be saying things that most people should not hear. And at this moment it seems to be for the purpose of naming Alkibiades' condition that Socrates reminds the reader of their privacy. A number of possible reasons for the emphasis on privacy in this regard come to mind. Socrates likely would not choose to call Alkibiades

stupid in front of a crowd.

In the first place, his having just recognized his ignorance makes him far less stupid than the crowd and it would be inappropriate to have them feel they are better than he. Alkibiades is by nature a cut above the many, and it would be a sign of contempt to expose him to ridicule in front of the many. Though he may be in a sorry condition, he is being compared to another standard than the populace.

Secondly, to expose and make Alkibiades sensitive to public censure is probably not in his best interests. A cultivation in most noble youths of the appropriate source of their honor and dishonor is important. Socrates, by not making Alkibiades feel mortified in front of the many, is heightening his respect for the censure of men like Socrates. Without this alternative, the man who seeks glory is confronted with a paradox of sorts. He wants the love/adoration of the many, and yet he despises the things they love or adore. Alkibiades is being shown that the praise of few (and if the principle is pushed to its limit, eventually the praise of one - oneself, i.e. pride) is more to be prized.

Thirdly, as Socrates explains to Meletus in his trial (Apology 26a), when someone does something unintentionally, it is correct to instruct him privately and not to summon the attention of the public. Alkibiades is not ignorant on purpose; Socrates should privately instruct him. It is also probable that Alkibiades will only accept private criticism which doesn't threaten his status.

And perhaps fourthly, if Socrates were to insult Alkibiades in public the many would conclude that there was a schizm between them. Because they are men whose natures are akin, and because of their (symbolic) representation of politics and philosophy, or power and

knowledge, any differences they have must remain private. It is in their best interest as well as the interest of the public, that everyone perceive the two as being indivisible. And as was observed earlier, even the wisest politicians must appear perfectly confident of their knowledge and plans. This is best done if they conceal their private doubts and display complete trust in their advisors, providing a united front when facing the many.

When Socrates suggests Perikles is a possible exception, Alkibiades names some of the wise men with whom Perikles conversed to obtain his wisdom. Those whom he names are conventionally held to be wise; Alkibiades might not refer to the same people by the end of this conversation with Socrates. In any event, upon Alkibiades' mention of the wise men, Socrates insinuates that Perikles' wisdom may be in doubt. Anybody who is wise in some subject is able to make another wise in it, just as Alkibiades' writing teacher taught Alkibiades, and whomever else he wishes, about letters. The person who learns is also then able to enlighten another man. The same holds true of the harper and the trainer (but apparently not the flute player, cf. 106e). The ability to point to one's student and to show his capability is a fine proof of knowing anything. If Perikles didn't make either of his sons wise, or Alkibiades' brother (Kleinias the madman), why is Alkibiades in his sorry condition? Alkibiades confesses that he is at fault for not paying attention to Perikles. Still, he swears by the king of gods that there isn't any Athenian or stranger or slave or foreman who is said to have become wise through conversation with Perikles, as various students of sophists have been said to have become wise and erudite through lessons. Socrates doesn't need to explicate the conclusion. Instead, he asks Alkibiades

what he intends to do.

The conclusion of the argument is never uttered. It is obviously meant to question Perikles' wisdom, but rather than spell it out, the topic is abruptly changed. If Perikles were dead, not alive and in power, piety would not admit of even this much criticism to be levied. Alkibiades would be expected to defend his uncle against those outside the family; and all Athenians to defend him against critics from other poleis. In addition, if this was a public discussion, civic propriety would demand silence in front of the many concerning one's doubts about the country's leaders. But since they are indeed alone, and need not worry about the effects on others of their discussion of Perikles' wisdom, they might have concluded the argument. The curious reader will likely examine various reasons for not finishing it. Three possibilities appear to be somewhat supported by the discussion to this point.

One notices, to begin with, that it would be adequate for the argument, if a person could be found who was reputed to have gained wisdom from Perikles. Given that a reputation among the many has not been highly regarded previously in the dialogue, there seems little need to press this point in the argument. If a man was said to have been made wise by Perikles, the criteria by which that judgment would be made seem much less reliable than the criteria whereby the many evaluate a man's skill in letters. There is no proof of Perikles' ability to make another wise in finding someone who is reputed to be wise. Conversely, Perikles may well have made someone wise who did not also achieve the reputation for wisdom.

A second point in connection with the argument is that the three subjects mentioned are those in which Alkibiades has had lessons.

Alkibiades has ability in them, yet cannot point to people whom he has made wise in letters, harping or wrestling. That does not seem sufficient proof that he is ignorant (thus that his master was ignorant and so on). It is also not clear that Alkibiades' teachers could have made any student whomsoever they wished, wise in these subjects; Perikles' sons must have achieved their reputation as simpletons (118e) from failing at something. Knowledge cannot require, for proof, that one has successfully taught someone else. Not all people try to teach what they know. There must be other proofs of competence, such as winning at wrestling, or pleasing an audience through harping. Similarly, not having taught someone may not prove one's ignorance; it may just indicate unwilling and incapable students. Alkibiades, for example, didn't learn to play the flute. There is no indication that his teacher was incapable - either of playing or of teaching. Alkibiades is said to have refused to learn it because of considerations of his own. It might also be suggested that pointing to students doesn't solve the major problem of proving someone's knowledge. Is it any easier to recognize knowledge in a student than in a teacher?

A third closely connected point is that some knowledge may be of such significance that the wise man properly spends his time actively using it (e.g., by ruling) and not teaching it.[98] Perikles, through ruling, may have made the Athenians as a whole better off, and perhaps even increased their knowledge somewhat. Had his son and heirs to his power observed his example while he was in office, they too might have become wiser. Adding further endorsement to this notion is the quite reasonable supposition that some of the things a wise politician knows cannot be taught through speech but only through example, just as some kinds of knowledge must be gained by experience. He may communicate his

teaching through his example, or even less obviously, through whatever institutions or customs he has established or revised. Some subjects should probably also be kept secret for the state, and some types of prudential judgement are acquired only be guided experience. Perikles' very silence, indeed, may be a testimony to his political wisdom.[99]

In response to Socrates' question as to what Alkibiades will do, the young man suggests that they put their heads together (119b). This marks the completion of Alkibiades' turning around. Alkibiades, who began the discussion annoyed and haughty has requested Socrates' assistance in escaping his predicament. He is ready to accept Socrates' advice. This locution (of putting their heads together) will be echoed later by Socrates (124c) and will mark another stage of their journey together. The central portion of the dialogue, the portion between the two joinings of their heads, is what shall be taken up next.

Since most of the men who do the work of the polis are uneducated (119b), Alkibiades presumes he is assured of gaining an easy victory over them on the basis of his natural qualities. If they were educated, he would have to take some care with his learning, just as much training is required to compete with athletes. But they are ignorant amateurs and should be no challenge.

Socrates launches into an exclamatory derision of this "best of men." What he has just said is unworthy of the looks and other resources of his. Alkibiades doesn't know what Socrates means by this and Socrates responds that he is vexed for Alkibiades and for his love. Alkibiades shouldn't expect this contest to be with these men here. When Alkibiades inquires with whom his contest is to be, Socrates asks if that is a question worthy of a man who considers himself superior. Alkibiades wants

to ascertain if Socrates is suggesting that his contest is not with these men, the politicians of the polis.

This passage is central to the First Alkibiades. The answer implicit in Socrates' response I deem to be far more profound than it might seem to the casual observer. Hopefully the analysis here will support this judgement and show as well, that this question of the contest (agon) is a paramount question in Alkibiades' life, in the lives of all superior men, and in the quest for the good as characterized by political philosophy.

If Alkibiades' ambition is really unworthy of him, if he thinks he ought to strive only be be as competent as the Athenians, then Socrates is vexed for his love. Earlier (104e) the reader was informed that Socrates would have had to put aside his love for Alkibiades if Alkibiades proved not to have such a high ambition. Thus Socrates was attracted to Alkibiades' striving nature. He followed the youth about for so long because Alkibiades' desires for power were growing. What thus differentiates Alkibiades from other youths (such as several of those with whom Socrates is shown in the dialogues, to have spent time) is that he has more exalted ambitions than they. Should Socrates come to the conclusion that Alkibiades does not in fact have this surpassing will for power, the philosopher would be forced to put away his love for Alkibiades. Now, after some discussion, it seems there is a possibility that Alkibiades wants only to be as great as other politicians. Many boys wish this; Alkibiades' eros would not be outstanding. Were this true, it would indeed be no wonder if Socrates were vexed for his love.

However, it appears that this is just something Alkibiades has said (119c.3, 9). Socrates' love is not released, so Alkibiades passes this, the test of Socrates' love. It is at this point in the dialogue

that one can finally discern the character of the test. The question, really, is what constitutes a high enough ambition. An athlete must try to find out with whom to train and fight, for how long, how closely, and at what time (119b; 107d-108b). He determines all of this himself; he determines, in other words, the extent of his ambition to improve and care for himself in terms of his contest. That with whom he fights determines how he prepares himself. The contest is thus a standard against which to judge his achievement.

The next step appears to be obvious: for the athlete of the soul as well as the athlete of the body, the question is with whom ought he contest. Socrates suggests shortly that should Alkibiades' ambition be to rule Athens, then his contest would rightly be with other rulers, namely the Spartan kings and the Great King of Persia. Since Socrates apparently proceeds to compare in some detail the Spartan and Persian princes' preparations for the contest, the surface impression is that Alkibiades really must presume his contest to be with the Persians and Spartans. The reader remembers, however, that Alkibiades would rather die than be limited to ruling Athens (105b-c). What is the proper contest for someone who desires to rule the known, civilized world and to have his rule endure beyond his own lifetime; what is the preparation requisite for truly great politics? At this point the question of the contest assumes an added significance. The reference cannot be any actual ruler; the inquiry has encountered another dimension of complexity.

The larger significance is, it is suspected, connected to the earlier discussion about the role of the very concept of the superior man in political philosophy, particularly in understanding the nature of man. The very idea that a contest for which one ought to prepare oneself

is with something not actualized by men of the world (at least not in an obvious sense since it cannot be any actual ruler) poses problems for some views of human nature. For example, in the opinion of those who believe that man's "nature" is simply what he actually is, or what is "out there"; the actual men of the world and their demonstrated range of possibilities are what indicate the nature of man. On this view, man's nature, typically is understood to be some kind of statistical norm. These people will agree that politics is limited by man and thought about political things is thus limited by man's nature, but they will not concede the necessity of looking toward the best man.

The argument to counter this position is importantly epistemological. It is almost a surety that any specific individual will deviate from the norm to some degree, and the difference can only be described as tending to be higher or lower than, or more or less than, the norm. This deviation, which is to one side or other of the norm, makes the individual either better or worse than the norm. Thus individuals, it may be said, can be arranged hierarchically based on their position relative to the norm and "the better" (cf. 107d-109a).

Whenever one tries to account for an individual's hierarchical position vis a vis the norm, it is done in terms of circumstances which limit or fail to limit his realization of his potential. Since no one is satisfied with an explanation of a deviation such as "that is understandable, 25% of the cases are higher than normal," some explanation of why this individual stopped short, or proceeded further than average is called for.[100] The implicit understanding of the potential, or of the proper/ideal proportions, then, is what allows for comparison between individuals. By extension, this understanding of the potential, whether

or not it is actualized, is what provides the ability to judge between regimes or societies. The amount a polity varies (or its best men, or its average men) from the potential is the measure of its quality relative to other polities. The explanation of this variation (geographic location, form of regime, economic dependency, or other standard reasons) will be in terms of factors which limit it from nearing, or allow it to approach nearer the goal.

As it is not uniformly better to have more and not less the normal of any characteristic, any consistent judgement of deviation from the norm must be made in light of the best. Indeed, it usually is, either explicitly or implicitly. This teleological basis of comparison is the common-sensical one, the prescientific basis of judgement. When someone is heard to remark "what a man," one most certainly does not understand him to be suggesting that the man in question has precisely normal characteristics. Evaluating education provides a clear and fitting example of how the potential, not the norm, serves as the standard for judging. A teacher does not attempt to teach his students to conform to the norm in literary, or mathematical ability. It would be ludicrous for him to stop teaching mid-year, say, because the normal number of his students reached the norm of literacy for their age. Indeed, education itself can be seen as an attempt to exceed the norm (in the direction of excellence) and thereby to raise it. That can only be done if there is a standard other than the norm from which to judge the norm itself. The superior man understands this. He competes with the best, not the norm. As a youth he comes to know that a question central to his ambition, or will for power is that of his proper contest.

The theoretical question of how one knows with whom to compete is

very difficult although it may (for a long time) have a straightforward practical solution. It is at the interface between the normally accepted solution and the search for the real answer that Alkibiades and Socrates find themselves, here in the middle of their conversation.

For most people during part of their lives, and for many people all of their life, the next step in one's striving, the next contestant one must face, is relatively easy to establish. Just as a wrestler proceeds naturally from local victory through stages toward world championship, so too does political ambition have ready referents - up to a point. It is at that point that Alkibiades finds himself now, no doubt partly with the help of Socrates prodding his ambitions (e.g., 105b. ff, 105e). What had made it relatively easy to know his contestant before were the pictures of the best men as Alkibiades understood them, namely politically successful men, Kyros and Xerxes (much as an ambitious wrestler usually knows that a world championship title is held by someone in particular). Alkibiades' path had been guided. Socrates has chosen to address Alkibiades now, perhaps because Alkibiades' ambition is high enough that the conventional models no longer suffice. Alkibiades is at the stage wherein he must discover what the truly best man is, actual examples have run out. He recognizes that he needs Socrates' help (119b); no one else has indicated that Alkibiades' contest might take place beyond the regular sphere of politics, with contestants other than the actual rulers of the world. But how is he to discover the best man in order that he may compete?

This is the theoretical question of most significance to man, and could possibly be solved in a number of ways. Within the confines of the dialogue, however, this analysis will not move further than to recognize

both the question, and its centrality to political philosophy.[101] To note in passing, however, there may be many other questions behind that of the best man. There may, for example, be more than one kind of best man, and a decision between them may involve looking at a more prior notion of "best."

At any rate, it has been shown that it is apparently no accident that the central question in a dialogue on the nature of man is a question by a superior youth as to his proper contest. What is not yet understood is why a philosophic man's eros is devoted to a youth whose erotic ambition is for great politics, a will to power over the whole world.

By means of a thinly veiled reference to Athen's Imperial Navy, over which Alkibiades would later have full powers as commander, Socrates attempts to illustrate to the youth the importance of choosing and recognizing the proper contestants. Supposing, for example, Alkibiades were intending to pilot a trireme into a sea battle, he would view being as capable as his fellows merely a necessary qualification. If he means to act nobly (kalos) for himself and his city, he would want to so far surpass his fellows as to make them feel only worthy enough to fight under him, not against him. It doesn't seem fitting for a leader to be satisfied with being better than his soldiers while neglecting the scheming and drilling necessary if his focus is the enemy's leaders. Alkibiades asks to whom Socrates is referring and Socrates responds with another question. Is Alkibiades unaware that their city often wars with Sparta and the Great King?[102] If he intends to lead their polis, he'd correctly suppose his contest was with the Spartan and Persian kings. His contest is not with the likes of Meidias who retain a slavish nature and try to run the polis by flattering, not ruling it. If he looks to that sort

for his goal, then indeed he needn't learn what's required for the greatest contest, or perform what needs exercising, or prepare himself adequately for a political career (120c). Alkibiades, the best of men, has to consider the implications of believing that the Spartan generals and the Persian kings are like all others (i.e., no better than normal).[103] Firstly, one takes more care of oneself if one thinks the opponents worthy, and no harm is done taking care of oneself. Assuredly that sufficiently establishes that it is bad to hold the opinion that they are no better than anyone else.[104]

Almost as a second thought, Socrates turns to another criterion which might indicate why having a certain opinion is bad - truth (cf. Republic 386c). There is another reason, he continues, namely that the opinion is probably false. It is likely that better natures come from well-born families where they will in the end become virtuous in the event they are well brought up.[105] The Spartan and Persian kings, descended from Perseus, the son of Zeus, are to be compared with Socrates' and Alkibiades' ancestral lines to see if they are inferior.[106] Alkibiades is quick to point out that his goes back to Zeus as well, and Socrates adds that he comes from Zeus through Daidalos and Hephaistos, son of Zeus. Since ancestral origin in Zeus won't qualitatively differentiate the families, Socrates points out that in both cases - Sparta and Persia - every step in the line was a king, whereas both Socrates and Alkibiades (and their fathers) are private men. The royal families seem to win the first round. The homelands of the various families could be next compared, but it is likely that Alkibiades' heritage, which Socrates is able to describe in detail, would arouse laughter. In ancestry and in birth and breeding, those people are superior, for, as Alkibiades should have

observed, Spartan kings have their wives guarded so that no one outside the line could corrupt the queen,[107] and the Persians have such awe for the king that no one would dare, including the queen.

With the conclusion of Socrates' and Alkibiades' examination of the various ancestries of the men, and before proceeding to the discussions of their births and nurtures, a brief pause is called for to look at the general problem of descent and the philosophic significance to have in this dialogue.

References to familial descent are diffused throughout the First Alkibiades. It begins by calling attention to Alkibiades' ancestry and five times in the dialogue is he referred to as the son of Kleinias (103a, 105d, 112c, 113b, 131e). On two occasions he is even addressed as the son of Deinomakhe (105d, 123c). If that weren't enough, this dialogue marks one of only two occasions on which Socrates' mother, the midwife Phainarete, is named (cf. Theaitetos 149a). The central of the things on which Socrates said Alkibiades prides himself is his family, and Socrates scrutinizes it at the greatest length. The sons of Perikles are mentioned, as are other familial relations such as the brother of Alkibiades. The lineages of the Persian kings, of the Spartan kings, of Alkibiades and Socrates are probed, and Socrates reveals that he has bothered to learn and to repeat the details. The mothers of the Persian kings and Spartan kings are given an important role in the dialogue, and in general the question of ancestry is noticeably dominant, warranting the reader's exploration.

As already discussed in the beginning, the reference to Alkibiades' descent might have philosophic significance in the dialogue. Here again, the context of the concern about descent is explicitly the consideration

of the natures of men. Better natures usually come from better ancestors (as long as they also have good nurtures). At the time of birth, an individual's ancestry is almost the only indication of his nature, the most important exception being, of course, his sex. But, as suggested by Socrates' inclusion of the proviso that they be well brought up (120e), a final account of man's nature must look to ends not only origins, and to his nurture, not only descent. Nurture (paideia) is intended to mean a comprehensive sense of education, including much more than formal schooling; indeed, it suggests virtually everything that affects one's upbringing. The importance of this facet in the development of a man's nature becomes more obvious when one remembers the different characteristics of offspring of the same family (e.g., Kleinias and Alkibiades, both sons of Kleinias and Deinomakhe, or the sons of Ariston participating in the Republic). These suggestions, added to the already remarked upon importance of nurture in a man's life, mutually support the contention that nature is to be understood in terms of a fulfilled end providing a standard for nurture. The nature of man, if it is to be understood in terms of a telos, his fulfilled potential, must be more than that which he is born as. An individual's nature, then, is a function of his descent and his nurture. Often they are supplementary, at least superficially; better families being better educated, they are that much more aware and concerned with the nurture of their offspring. 'Human nature' would be distinguished from any individual's nature in so far as it obviously does not undergo nurture; but if properly understood, it provides the standard for the nurture of individuals. To the point of birth, then, ancestry is the decisive feature in a man's nature, and thus sets limits on his nature. When his life begins, that turns around, and

education and practice become the key foci for a man's development. After birth a man cannot alter his ancestry,[108] and nurture assumes its role in shaping his being, his nature.

The issue is addressed in a rather puzzling way by Socrates' claim that his ancestry goes through Daidalos to Hephaistos, the son of Zeus. This serves to establish (as authoritatively as in the case of the others) that he is well-born. It does nothing to counter Alkibiades' claim that he, like the Persian and Spartan kings, is descended from Zeus (all of them claiming descent from the king of the Olympians); in other words, it does not appear to serve a purpose in the explicit argument and the reader is drawn to wonder why he says it.

Upon examination one discovers that this is not the regular story. Normally in accounts of the myths, the paternal heritage of Hephaistos is ambiguous at best. Hesiod relates that Hephaistos was born from Hera with no consort.[109] Hera did not mate with a man; Haphaistos had no father.[110] Socrates thus descends from a line begun by a woman - the queen of the heavens, the goddess of marriage and childbirth (cf. Theaitetos 148e-151e; also 157c, 160e-161e, 184b, 210b-c; Statesman 268b). By mentioning Hephaistos as an ancestor, Socrates is drawing attention to the feminine aspect of his lineage. An understanding of the feminine is crucial to an account of human nature. The male/female division is the most fundamental one for mankind, rendering humans into two groups (cf. Symposium 190d-192d). The sexes and their attraction to each other provide the most basic illustration of eros, perhaps man's most powerful (as well as his most problematic) drive or passion. Other considerations include the female role in the early nurture of children (Republic 450c) and thus the certain, if indirect effect of sex on the

polis (it is not even necessary to add the suspicions about a more subtle part for femininity reserved in the natures of some superior men, the philosophers). Given this, it is quite possible that Socrates is suggesting the importance of the male/female division in his employment of 'descent' as an extended philosophic metaphor for human nature.

A brief digression concerning Hephaistos and Daidalos may be useful at this point. Daidalos was a legendary ingenious craftsman, inventor and sculptor (famous for his animate sculptures). He is said to have slain an apprentice who showed enough promise to threaten Daidalos' supremacy, and he fled to Krete. In Krete he devised a hollow wooden cow which allowed the queen to mate with a bull. The offspring was the Minotaur. Daidalos constructed the famous labyrinth into which select Athenian youths were led annually, eventually to be devoured by the Minotaur.[111] Daidalos, however, was suspected of supplying the youth Theseus (soon to become a great political founder) with a means to exit from the maze and was jailed with his son Ikaros. A well known legend tells of their flight. Minos, the Kretan king was eventually killed in his pursuit of Daidalos.

Hephaistos was the divine and remarkably gifted craftsman of the Olympians, himself one of the twelve major gods. Cast from the heavens as an infant, Hephaistos remained crippled. He was, as far as can be told, the only Olympian deity who was not of surpassingly beautiful physical form. It is interesting that Socrates would claim descent from him. Hephaistos was noted as a master craftsman and manufactured many wondrous things for the gods and heroes. His most remarkable work might have been that of constructing the articles for the defence of the noted warrior, Akhilleus, the most famous of which was the shield (Homer,

Iliad, XVIII, 368-617).

The next topic discussed in this, the longest speech in the dialogue, is the nurture of the Persian youths.[112] Subsequently Socrates discourses about Spartan and Persian wealth and he considers various possible reactions to Alkibiades' contest with the young leaders of both countries. The account Socrates presents raises questions as to his possible intentions. It is quite likely that Socrates and Xenaphon, who also gives an account of the nurture of the Persian prince, have more in mind than mere interesting description. Their interpretations and presentations of the subject differ too markedly for their purposes to have been simply to report the way of life in another country.[113] Thus, rather than worry over matters of historical accuracy, the more curious features of Socrates' account will be considered, such as the relative emphasis on wealth over qualities of soul, and the rather lengthy speculation about the queens', not the kings', regard for their sons.

In pointed contrast to the Athenians, of whose births the neighbors do not even hear, when the heir to the Persian throne is born the first festivities take place within the palace and from then on all of Asia celebrates his birthday. The young child is cared for by the best of the king's eunuchs, instead of an insignificant nurse, and he is highly honored for shaping the limbs of the body. Until the boy is perhaps seven years old, then, his attendant is not a woman who would provide a motherly kind of care, nor a man who would provide an example of masculinity and manliness, but a neutered person. The manly Alkibiades, as well as the reader, might well wonder as to the effect this would have on the boy, and whether it is the intended effect.

At the age of seven the boys learn to ride horses and commence to

hunt. This physical activity, it seems, continues until the age of fourteen when four of the most esteemed Persians become the boys' tutors. They represent four of the virtues, being severally wise, just, temperate, and courageous. The teaching of piety is conducted by the wisest tutor of the four (which certainly allows for a number of interesting possibilities). He instructs the youth in the religion of Zoroaster, or in the worship of the gods, and he teaches the boy that which pertains to a king - certainly an impressive task. The just tutor teaches him to be completely truthful (122a); the temperate tutor to be king and free man overall of the pleasures and not to be a slave to anyone, and the brave tutor trains him to be unafraid, for fear is slavery. Alkibiades had instead an old (and therefore otherwise domestically useless) servant to be his tutor.

Socrates suspends discussion of the nurture of Alkibiades' competitors. It would promise to be a long description and too much of a task (122b). He professes that what he has already reported should suggest what follows. Thereby Socrates challenges the reader to examine the manner in which this seemingly too brief description of nurture at least indicates what a complete account might entail.

This appears to be the point in the dialogue which provides the most fitting opportunity to explicitly and comprehensively consider nurture. It has become clear to Socrates and Alkibiades that the correct nurture is essential to the greatest contest, and Socrates leaves Alkibiades (and the reader) with the impression that he regards the Persian nurture to be appropriate. One might thus presume that an examination of Persian practices would make apparent the more important philosophical questions about nurture.

Socrates had been specific in noticing the subjects of instruction received by Alkibiades (106e), and the reader might follow likewise in observing the lessons of the Persian princes. On the face of it, Socrates provides more detail regarding this aspect of their nurture than others, so it might be prudent to begin by reflecting upon the teaching of religion and kingly things, of truth-telling, of mastering pleasures, and of mastering fears. Perhaps the Persian system indicates how these virtues are properly seen as one, or how they are arranged together, for one suspects that conflicts might normally arise in their transmission. These subjects are being taught by separate masters. A consistent nurture demands that they are all compatible, or that they can agree upon some way of deciding differences. If the four tutors can all recognize that one of them ought to command, this would seem to imply that wisdom somehow encompasses all other virtues. In that case, the attendance of the one wise man would appear to be the most desirable in the education of a young man. The wise man's possession of the gamut of virtues would supply the prince with a model of how they properly fit together. Without a recognized hierarchy, there might be conflicts between the virtues. Indeed, as the reader has had occasion to observe in an earlier context of the dialogue, two of the substantive things taught by two different tutors may conflict strongly. There are times when a king ought not to be honest. The teacher of justice then would be suggesting things at odds with that which pertains to a king. How would the boys know which advice to choose, independently of any other instruction? In addition, Socrates suggests that the bravest Persian (literally the 'manliest') tells or teaches the youth to fear nothing, for any fear is slavery. But surely the expertise of the tutor of courage would seem to consist

in his knowing what to fear and what not to fear. Otherwise the youth would not become courageous but reckless. Not all fears indicate that one is a slave: any good man should run out of the way of a herd of stampeding cattle, an experienced mountain climber is properly wary of crumbling rock, and even brave swimmers ought to remain well clear of whirlpools. For this to be taught it appears that the courageous tutor would have to be in agreement with the tutor of wisdom. These sorts of difficulties seem to be perennial, and a system of nurture which can overcome them would provide a fine model, it seems, for education into virtues. If the Persian tutors could indeed show the virtues to be harmonious, it would be of considerable benefit to Alkibiades to understand precisely how it is accomplished.

The question of what is to be taught leads readily to a consideration of how to determine who is to teach. The problem of ascertaining the competence of teachers seems to be a continuing one (as the reader of this dialogue has several occasions to observe - e.g., 110e, ff.). But besides their public reputation there is no indication of the criteria employed in the selection of the Persian tutors. To this point in the dialogue, two criteria have been acknowledged as establishing qualification for teaching (or for the knowledge requisite for teaching). Agreement between teachers on their subject matter (111b-c) is important for determining who is a proper instructor, as is a man's ability to refer to knowledgeable students (118d). As has already been indicated, both of these present interesting difficulties. Neither, however, is clearly or obviously applicable to the Persian situation. The present king might prove to be the only student to whom they can point (in which case they may be as old as Zopyros) and he might well be the only one in a position

to agree with them. It is conceivable that some kinds of knowledge are of such difficulty that one cannot expect too many people to agree. If the Persians have indeed solved the problems of choosing tutors, and of reconciling public reputation for virtue with actual possession of virtue, they have overcome what appears to be a most persistent difficulty regarding human nurture.

Another issue which surfaces in Socrates' short account of the Persian educational system is that of the correct age to begin such nurture. Education to manhood begins at about the age of puberty for the prince. If the virtues are not already quite entrenched in his habits or thoughts (in which latter case he would have needed another source of instruction besides the tutors - as perhaps one might say the Iliad and Odyssey provide for Athenian youths such as Alkibiades), it is doubtful that they could be inculcated at the age of fourteen. Socrates is completely silent about the Persians' prior education to virtue, disclosing only that they began riding horses and participating in "the hunt." Since both of those activities demand some presence of mind, one may presume that early Persian education was not neglected. This earliest phase of education is of the utmost importance, however, for if the boy had been a coward for fourteen years, one might suspect tutoring by a man at that point would not likely make him manly. And to make temperate a lad accustomed to indulgence would be exceedingly difficult. Forcibly restricting his consumption would not have a lasting effect unless there were some thing to draw upon within the understanding of the boy, but Socrates supplies Alkibiades with no hint as to what that might be. Presently the young man will be reminded of Aesop's fables and the various stories that children hear. If, in order to qualify as proper

nurturing, such activities as children participate in - e.g., music and gymnastics - ought to be carried out in a certain mode or with certain rules (cf. Republic 377a-e; 376c-414c), Socrates gives no indication of their manner here. Unless stories and activities build a respect for piety and justice, and the like, it is not obvious that the respect will be developed when someone is in his mid-teens. It would seem difficult, if not impossible, to erase years of improper musical and gymnastic education. Socrates remains distressingly silent about so very much of the Persian (or proper) method of preparing young men for the great contest.

The only one who would care about Alkibiades' birth, nurture or education, would be some chance lover he happened to have, Socrates says in reference to his seemingly unique interest in Alkibiades' nature (122b). He concludes what was presumably the account of the education of the Persian princes, intimating that Alkibiades would be shamed by a comparison of the wealth, luxury, robes and various refinements of the Persians. It is odd that he would mention such items in the context immediately following the list of subjects the tutors were to teach in the education of the soul of the king - including the complete mastery of all pleasure. It is even more curious that he would deign to mention these in the context of making Alkibiades sensitive to what was required for his preparation for his proper contest. The historical Alkibiades, it seems, would not be so insensitive to these luxuries as to need reminding of them, and the dialogue to this point has not given any indication that these things of the body are important to the training Alkibiades needs by way of preparing for politics. The fact that Socrates expressly asserts that Alkibiades would be ashamed at having less of those

things corroborates the suggestion that more is going on in this long speech than is obvious at the surface.

Briefly, and in a manner that doesn't appear to make qualities of soul too appealing, Socrates lists eleven excellences of the Spartans: temperance, orderliness, readiness, easily contented, great-mindedness, well-orderedness, manliness, patient endurance, labor loving, contest loving and honor loving. Socrates neither described these glowingly, nor explains how the Spartans come to possess them. He merely lists them. Then, interestingly, he remarks that Alkibiades in comparison is a child. He does not say that Alkibiades would be ashamed, or that he would lose, but that he had somehow not yet attained them. Like some children presumably, he may have the potential to grow into them if they are part of the best nature. There is no implication, then, that Alkibiades' nature is fundamentally lacking in any of these virtues, and this is of special interest to the reader given the more or less general agreement, even during his lifetime, as to his wantonness. Socrates here suggests that Alkibiades is like a child with respect to the best nature.

This part of Socrates' speech reveals two possible alternatives to the Persian education, alternatives compatible with the acquisition of virtue. A Spartan nurture was successful in giving Spartans the set of virtues Socrates listed. Since Alkibiades obviously cannot regain the innocence necessary to benefit from early disciplined habituation, and since Socrates nevertheless understands him to be able to grow into virtue in some sense, there must be another way open to him. This twenty year old "child" has had some early exposure to virtue, at least through poetry, and perhaps it is through this youthful persuasion that

Socrates will aid him in his education. Indeed Socrates appeals often to his sense of the honorable and noble - which is related to virtue even if improperly understood by Alkibiades. As the dialogue proceeds from this point, Socrates appears to be importantly concerned with making Alkibiades virtuous through philosophy. He is trying to persuade Alkibiades to let his reason rule him in his life, most importantly in his desire to know himself. Perhaps, on this account, one might acquire virtue in two ways, a Spartan nurture, for example, and through philosophy.

Again, however, Socrates stops before he has said everything he might have said, and turns to the subject of wealth. In fact, Scorates claims that he must not keep silent with regard to riches if Alkibiades thinks about them at all. Thus, according to Socrates, not only is it not strange to turn from the soul to wealth, but it is even appropriate. Socrates must attest to the riches of Spartans, who in land and slaves and horses and herds far outdo any estate in Athens, and he most especially needs to report on the wealth of gold and silver privately held in Lakedaimon. As proof for this assertion, which certainly runs counter to almost anyone's notion of Spartan life, Socrates uses a fable within this fabulous story.

Socrates assumes Alkibiades has learned Aesop's fables - somehow - for without supplying any other details he simply mentions that there are many tracks of wealth going into Sparta and none coming out. In order to explain Socrates' otherwise cryptic remarks, the children's fable will be recounted. Aesop's story concerns an old lion who must eat by his wits because he can no longer hunt or fight. He lies in a cave pretending to be ill and when any animals visit him he devours them. A fox eventually happens by, but seeing through the ruse he remains outside the cave. When

the lion asks why he doesn't come in, the fox responds that he sees too many tracks entering the cave and none leaving it.

The lion and the fox represent the classic confrontation between power and knowledge.[114] One notices that in the fable the animals generally believe an opinion that proves to be a fatal mistake. The fox doesn't. He avoids the error. The implication is that Socrates and Alkibiades have avoided an important mistake that the rest of the Greeks have made. One can only speculate on what it is precisely. They seem to be the only ones aware of one of Sparta's qualities, a quality which, oddly, is in some sense essential to Alkibiades' contest. Perhaps Socrates' use of the fable merely suggests that erroneous opinions about the nature of one's true contestant may prove fatal, but there may be more to it than that.

This fable fittingly appears in the broad context of nurture; myths and fables are generally recognized for their pedagogic value. Any metaphoric connection this fable brings to mind with the more famous Allegory of the Cave in Plato's Republic will necessarily be speculative. But they are not altogether out of place.[115] The cave, in a sense, represents the condition of most people's nurtures and thus represents a fitting setting for a fable related in this dialogue. Given Socrates' fears of what will happen to Alkibiades (132a, 135e) and Alkibiades' own concern for the demos, the suggested image of people (otherwise fit enough to be outside) being enticed into the cave and unable to leave it might be appropriate,

At any rate, in terms of the argument for Sparta's wealth, this evidence does nothing to show that the wealth is privately held. It is apparent, after all, that the evidence indicates gold is pouring into

Sparta from all over Greece, but not coming out of the country, whereas Socrates seems to interpret this as private, not public wealth. Perhaps the reader may infer from this that a difference between city and man is being subtly implied. Socrates is suggesting that wealth is an important part of the contest, and yet he includes himself in the contest at a number of points. This rather inconclusive and ambiguous reference to the wealth of Sparta and the Spartans might suggest that the difference between the city and man regarding riches, may be that great wealth is good for a city (for example, as Thucydides observes, wealth facilitates warmaking), and is thus something a ruler should know how to acquire - but not so good for an individual. Socrates' next statement supports this interpretation. A king's being wealthy might not mean that he uses it privately. Socrates informs Alkibiades that the king possesses the most wealth of any Spartans for there is a special tribute to him (123a-b). In any case, however great the Spartan fortunes appear compared with the fortunes of other Greeks, they are a mere pittance next to the Persian king's treasures. Socrates was told this himself by a trustworthy person who gathered his information by travelling and finding out what the local inhabitants said. Socrates treats this as valuable information, yet which, given his chosen way of life, he couldn't have acquired firsthand.

Large tracts of land are reserved for adorning the Persian queen with clothes, individual items having land specially set aside for them. There were fertile regions known as the "king's wife's girdle," veil, etc.[116] Certainly an indication of wealth, it also seems to suggest a wanton luxury, especially on the part of women (and which men flatter with gifts).

Returning to the supposed contest between Alkibiades and the

Spartan and the Persian kings, Socrates adopts a very curious framework for the bulk of the remainder of this discourse. He continues in terms of the thoughts of the mother of the king and proceeds as though she were, in part, in a dialogue with Alkibiades' mother, Deinomakhe. If she found out that the son of Deinomakhe was challenging her son, the king's mother, Amestris, would wonder on what Alkibiades could be trusting. The manner in which Socrates has the challenge introduced to Amestris does not reveal either of the men's names. Only their mothers are referred to - and the cost of the mothers' apparel seems to be as important to the challenge or contest as the size of the sons' estates. Only after he is told that the barbarian queen is wondering does the reader find out that her son's name is Artaxerxes and that she is aware that it is Alkibiades who is challenging her son. She might well have been completely ignorant of the existence of Deinomakhe's family, or she may have thought it was Kleinias, the madman (118e), who was the son involved. Since there is no contest with regards to wealth - either in land or clothing - Alkibiades must be relying on his industry and wisdom - the only thing the Greeks have of any worth.

Perhaps because she is a barbarian, or because of some inability on her part, or maybe some subtlety of the Greeks, she doesn't recognize the Greeks' speaking ability as one of their greatest accomplishments. Indeed, both in the dialogue and historically, it was his speaking ability on which Alkibiades was to concentrate much of his effort, and through which he achieved many of his triumphs. Greeks in general and Athenians in particular spent much time cultivating the art of speaking. Sophists and rhetoricians abounded. Rhapsodists and actors took part in the many dramatic festivals at Athens. Orators and politicians addressed crowds of

people almost daily (or so it seems).

Socrates continues. If she were to be informed (with reference to Alkibiades' wisdom and industriousness) that he was not yet twenty, and was utterly uneducated, and further, was quite satisfied with himself and refused his lover's suggestion to learn, take care of himself and exercise his habits before he entered a contest with the king, she would again be full of wonder. She would ask to what the youth could appeal and would conclude Socrates and Alkibiades (and Deinomakhe) were mad if they thought he could contend with her son in beauty (kalos), stature, birth, wealth, and the nature of his soul (123e). The last quality, the nature of the soul, has the most direct bearing on the theme of the dialogue, and as the reader remembers, is the promised but not previously included part of the list of reasons for Alkibiades' high opinion of himself (104a. ff.). Since it is also the most difficult to evaluate, one might reasonably wonder what authority Amestris' judgement commands. It is feasible for the reader to suspect that this is simply Socrates' reminder that a mother generally favors her own son. But perhaps her position and experience as wife and mother to kings enables her in some sense to judge souls.

Lampido, another woman, the daughter, wife and mother of three different kings, would also wonder, Socrates proposes, at Alkibiades' desire to contest with her son, despite his comparatively ignoble (kakos) upbringing. Socrates closes the discussion with the mothers of kings by asking Alkibiades if it is not shameful that the mothers and wives (literally, "the women belonging to the kings") of their enemies have a better notion than they of the qualities necessary for a person who wants to contend with them.

The problem of understanding human nature includes centrally the problem of understanding sex and the differences between men and women. Thus political philosophy necessarily addresses these matters. Half of a polity is made up of women and the correct ordering of a polity requires that women, as well as men, do what is appropriate. However, discovering the truth about the sexes is not simple in any event, partly at least because of one's exclusion from personal knowledge about the other sex; and it has become an arduous task to gather honest opinions from which to begin reflecting.

The discussion of women in this central portion of the dialogue is invested with political significance by what is explored later regarding the respective tasks of men and women (e.g., 126e-127b). Before proceeding to study the rest of this long speech, it may be useful to briefly sketch two problem areas. Firstly the outline of some of the range of philosophic alternatives presented by mankind's division into two sexes will be roughly traced out. This will foreshadow the later discussion of the work appropriate to the sexes. Secondly, a suggestion shall be ventured as to one aspect of how 'wonder' and philosophy may be properly understood to have a feminine element - an aspect that is connected to a very important theme of this dialogue.

Thus, in order to dispel some of the confusion before returning to the dialogue, the division of the sexes may imply, in terms of an understanding of human nature, that there is either one ideal that both sexes strive towards, or there is more than one. If there is one goal or end, it might be either the 'feminine,' the 'masculine,' a combination of the traits of both sexes, or a transcendent "humanness" that rises above sexuality. The first may be dismissed unless one is willing

to posit that everything is "out-of-whack" in nature and all the wrong people have been doing great human deeds. Traditionally, the dominant opinion has implicitly been that the characteristics of 'human' are for the most part those called 'masculine', or that males typically embody these characteristics to a greater extent. Should this be correct, then one may be warranted in considering nature simply "unfair" in making half of the people significantly weaker and less able to attain those characteristics. Should the single ideal for both sexes be a combination of the characteristics of both sexes, still other difficulties arise. A normal understanding of masculine and feminine refers to traits that are quite distinct; those who most combine the traits, or strike a mean, appear to be those who are most sexually confused.

The other possibility mentioned was that there be two (or more) sets of characteristics - one for man and one for woman. The difficulty with this alternative is unlike the difficulties encountered in the one-model proposal. One problem with having an ideal for each sex, or even with identifying some human characteristics more with one sex than the other, is that all of the philosophic questions regarding the fitting place of each sex still remain to be considered.

Some version of this latter alternative seems to be endorsed later in the First Alkibiades (126e-127b). There it is agreed (and agreement frequently is the most easily met of the suggested possible criteria of knowledge mentioned in the dialogue) that there are separate jobs for men and women. Accordingly, men and women are said to be rightly unable to understand each other's jobs and thus cannot agree on matters surrounding those jobs.

One of the implications of this, however, unmentioned by either

Socrates or Alkibiades, is that women therefore ought not to nurture young sons. A woman does not and cannot grasp what it is to be a man and to have manly virtue. Thus they cannot raise manly boys. However, this is contrary to common sense. One would think that if there was any task for which a woman should be suited (even if it demands more care than is often believed) it would be motherhood. Because of this a mother would have to learn a man's business if she would bear great sons. At this point the problems of the surface account of the First Alkibiades become apparent to even the least reflective reader.

If it is the same task, or if the same body of knowledge (or opinion) is necessary for being a great man as for raising a great man, then at least in one case the subjects of study for men and women are not exclusive. Women dominate the young lives of children. They must be able to turn a boy's ambitions and desires in the proper direction until the menfolk take over. Since it would pose practical problems for her to attempt to do so in deed, she must proceed primarily through speech, including judicious praise and blame, and that is why the fables and myths women relate ought to be of great concern to the men (cf. for example, Republic 377b-c). If, on the other hand, it requires completely different knowledge to raise great sons than it does to be great men, then men, by the argument of the dialogue should not expect to know women's work. If this is the proper philosophic conclusion the reader is to reach, then it is not so obviously disgraceful for the womenfolk to know better than Socrates and Alkibiades what it takes to enter the contest (124a). The disgrace, it seems, would consist in being unable to see the contradictions in the surface account of the First Alkibiades, and thus not being in a position to accept its invitation to delve deeper into the

problem of human nature.

At this point a speculation may be ventured as to why, in this dialogue, wonder takes on a feminine expression, and why elsewhere, Philosophy herself is described as feiminine (e.g., Republic 495-b-c, 536c, 495e; Gorgias 482a; cf. also Letter VII 328e, Republic 499c-d, 548b-c, 607b). One might say that a woman's secretiveness enhances her seductiveness.[117] Women are concerned with appearance (cf. 123c; the very apparel of the mothers of great sons is catalogued). Philosophy and women may be more alluring when disclosure ("disclothesure") of their innermost selves requires a certain persistence on the part of their suitors. Philosophy in its most beguiling expression is woman-like. When subtle and hidden, its mystery enhances its attractiveness. Perhaps - it will be suggested - perhaps for great men to be drawn to philosophy she must adopt a feminine mode of expression, in addition to the promise of a greater power; if viewed as a goddess she must be veiled, not wholly naked.

To further explore the analogue in terms of expression, one notices that women are cautious of themselves and protective of their own. They are aware, and often pass this awareness on to men that in some circles they must be addressed or adorned in a certain manner in order to avoid ridicule and appear respectable. As well, a woman's protection of her young is expected. Philosophy, properly expressed, should be careful to avoid harming the innocent; and a truly political philosopher should be protective of those who will not benefit from knowing the truth. If the truth is disruptive to the community, for example, he should be most reluctant to announce it publicly. The liberal notion that every truth is to be shared by all might be seen to defeminize philosophy. Women, too,

in speech will lie and dissemble to protect their own; in deed, they are more courageous in retreat, able to bear the loss of much in order to ensure the integrity of that of which they are certain is of most importance.

Political philosophy is not only philosophy about politics; it is doing (or at least expressing) all of one's philosophizing in a politic way. Its expression would be "feminine." This suggestion at least appears to square with the role of women in the dialogue. It accounts for the mothers' lively concern over the welfare and status of the powerful; it provides a possible understanding of how the 'masculine' and 'feminine' may have complementary tasks; it connects the female to 'wonder'; it lets the reader see the enormous significance of speech to politics; it reminds one of the power of eros as a factor in philosophy, in politics, in Socrates' attraction to Alkibiades, and in man's attraction to philosophy; it helps to explain why both lines of descent, the maternal as well as the paternal, are emphasized in the cases of the man coveting power and the man seeking knowledge. Through the very expression of either, politics and philosophy become interconnected.

Socrates addresses Alkibiades as a blessed man and tells him to attend him and the Delphic inscription, "know thyself." These people (presumably Socrates is referring to the enemy, with whose wives they were speaking; however, the analysis has indicated why the referent is left ambiguous: there is a deeper sense of 'contest' here than war with Persians and Spartans) are Socrates' and Alkibiades' competitors, not those whom Alkibiades thinks. Only industriousness and techne will give them ascendancy over their real competitors. Alkibiades will fail in achieving a reputation among Greeks and barbarians if he lacks those

qualities. And Socrates can see that Alkibiades desires that reputation more than anyone else ever loved anything.

The reader may have noticed that the two qualities Socrates mentions are very similar to the qualities of the Greeks mentioned by the barbarian queen above. Socrates is implicitly raising the Greeks above the barbarians by making the Greek qualities the most important, and he diminishes the significance of their victory in terms of wealth and land. He thus simultaneously indicts them on two counts. They do not recognize that Alkibiades is their big challenge, so they are in the disgraceful condition of which Alkibiades was accused, namely not having an eye to their enemies but to their fellows. By raising the Greek virtues above the barbarian qualities, Socrates throws yet more doubt on the view that they are indeed the proper contestants for Alkibiades. It is interesting that the barbarian queen knew or believed these were the Greek's qualities but she did not correctly estimate their importance.

Another wonderful feature of this longest speech in the First Alkibiades is the last line: "I believe you are more desirous of it than anyone else is of anything," (124b). Socrates ascribes to Alkibiades an extreme eros. It may even be a stranger erotic attraction or will to power than that marked by Socrates' eros for Alkibiades. But the philosopher wants to help and is able to see Alkibiades' will. Socrates even includes himself in the contest.[118] Socrates is indeed a curious man. So ends the longest speech in the dialogue.

Alkibiades agrees. He wants that. Socrates' speech seems very true. Alkibiades has been impressed with Socrates' big thoughts about politics, for Socrates had indicated that he is familiar enough with the greatest foreign political powers to make plausible/credible his implicit

or explicit criticism of them. Socrates has also tacitly approved of Alkibiades' ambitions to rule not only Athens, but an empire over the known world. Alkibiades must be impressed with this sentiment in democratic Athens. In addition to all this, Socrates has hinted to the youth that there is something yet bigger. Alkibiades requests Socrates' assistance and will do whatever Socrates wants. He begs to know what is the proper care he must take of himself.

Socrates echoes Alkibiades' sentiment that they must put their heads together (124c; cf. 119b). This is an off-quoted line from Homer's Iliad.[119] In the Iliad the decision had been made that information must be attained from and about the Trojans by spying on their camp. The brave warrior, Diomedes, volunteered to go, and asked the wily Odysseus to accompany him. Two heads were better than one and the best wits of all the Greek heroes were the wits of Odysseus. Diomedes recognized this and suggested they put their heads together as they proceed to trail the enemy to their camp, enter it and hunt for information necessary to an Akhaian victory.

Needless to say, the parallels between the Homeric account, the situation between Alkibiades and Socrates, and the Aesopian fable, are intriguing. When Alkibiades uttered these lines previously, it was appropriate in that he requested the philosopher (the cunning man) to go with him. Alkibiades and Socrates, like Diomedes and Odysseus, must enter the camp of the enemy to see what they were up against in this contest of contests, so to speak. Alkibiades, assuming the role of Diomedes, in a sense initiated the foray although an older, wiser man had supplied the occasion for it. Alkibiades had to be made to request Socrates' assistance. The part of the dialogue following Alkibiades'

quoting of Homer was a discussion of the contest of the superior man and ostensibly an examination of the elements of the contest. They thoroughly examined the enemy in an attempt to understand the very nature of this most important challenge.

This time, however, the wilier one (Socrates/Odysseus) is asking Alkibiades/Diomedes to join heads with him. The first use of the quote served to establish the importance of its link to power and knowledge. The second mention of the quote is perhaps intended to point to a consideration of the interconnectedness of power and knowledge. In what way do power and knowledge need each other? What draws Socrates and Alkibiades together?

The modern reader, unlike the Athenian reader, might find an example from Plato more helpful than one from Homer. Some of the elements of the relationship are vividly displayed in the drama of the opening passages of the Republic. The messenger boy runs between the many strong and the few wise.[120] His role is similar to that of the auxiliary class of the dialogue but is substantively reversed. Although he is the go-between who carries the orders of one group to the other and has the ability to use physical means to execute those orders (he causes Socrates literally to "turn around," and he takes hold of Socrates' cloak), he is carrying orders from those fit to be ruled to those fit to rule. What is especially interesting is the significance of these opening lines for the themes of the First Alkibiades. The first speaker in the Republic provides the connection between the powerful and the wise. And he speaks to effect their halt. There has to be a compromise between those who know but are fewer in number, and those who are stronger and more numerous but are unwise. The slave introduces the problem of the competing

claims to rule despite the fact that he has been conventionally stripped of his.

Polemarkhos, on behalf of the many (which includes a son of Ariston) uses number and strength as his claims over the actions of Socrates and Glaukon. Socrates suggests that speech opens up one other possibility. Perhaps the Few could persuade the Many. He does not suggest that the many use speech to persuade the few to remain (although this is what in fact happens when Adeimantos appeals to the novelty of a torch race). Polemarkhos asks "could you really persuade if we don't listen?" and by that he indicates a limit to the power of speech. Later in the dialogue it is interesting that the two potential rulers of the evening's discussion, Thrasymakhos and Socrates, seem to fight it out with words or at least have a contest. The general problem of the proper relation between strength and wisdom might be helpfully illuminated by close examination of examples such as those drawn from the Republic, the Iliad and Aesop's fable.

In any event, Socrates and Alkibiades must again join heads. Presumably, the reader may infer, the examination of the Spartans and Persians was insufficient. (That was suspected from the outset because Alkibiades would rather die than be limited to Athens. Sparta and Persia would be the proper contestants for someone intending only to rule Europe.) Perhaps they will now set out to discover the real enemy, the true contestant. The remainder of the dialogue, in a sense, is a discussion of how to combat ignorance of oneself. One might suggest that this is, in a crucial sense, the enemy of which Alkibiades is as yet not fully aware.

Socrates, by switching his position with Alkibiades vis-a-vis the quote, reminds the reader that Odysseus was no slouch at courage and that

Diomedes was no fool. It also foreshadows the switch in their roles made explicit at the end of the dialogue. But even more importantly, Socrates tells Alkibiades that he is in the same position as Alkibiades. He needs to take proper care of himself too, and requires education. His case is identical to Alkibiades' except in one respect. Alkibiades' guardian Perikles is not as good as Socrates' guardian god, who until now guarded Socrates against talking with Alkibiades. Trusting his guardian, Socrates is led to say that Alkibiades will not be able to achieve his ambitions except through Socrates.

This rather enigmatic passage of the First Alkibiades (124c) seems to reveal yet another aspect of the relation between knowledge and power. If language is central to understanding knowledge and power, it is thus instructive about the essential difference, if there is one, between men who want power and men who want knowledge. Socrates says that his guardian (presumably the daimon or god, 103a-b, 105e), who would not let him waste words (105e) is essentially what makes his case different than that of Alkibiades. In response to Alkibiades' question, Socrates only emphasizes that his guardian is better than Perikles, Alkibiades' guardian, possibly because it kept him silent until this day. Is Socrates perhaps essentially different from Alkibiades because he knows when to be silent? The reader is aware that according to most people, Socrates and Alkibiades would seem to differ on all important grounds. Their looks, family, wealth and various other features of their lives are in marked contrast. Socrates, however, disregards them totally, and fastens his attention on his guardian. And the only thing the reader knows about his guardian is that it affects Socrates' speech.

Socrates claims that because he trusts in the god he is able to

say (he does not sense opposition to his saying) that Alkibiades needs Socrates. To this Alkibiades retorts that Socrates is jesting or playing like a child. Not only may one wonder what is being referred to as a jest,[121] but one notices that Socrates surprisingly acknowledges that maybe he is. He asserts, at any rate, he is speaking truly when he remarks that they need to take care of themselves - all men do, but they in particular must. Socrates thereby firmly situates himself and Alkibiades above the common lot of men. He also implies that the higher, not the lower, is deserving of extra care. Needless to say, the notion that more effort is to be spent on making the best men even better is quite at odds with modern liberal views.

Alkibiades agrees, recognizing the need on his part, and Socrates joins in fearing he also requires care. The answer for the comrades demands that there be no giving up or softening on their part. It would not befit them to relinquish any determination. They desire to become as accomplished as possible in the virtue that is the aim of men who are good in managing affairs. Were one concerned with affairs of horsemanship, one would apply to horsemen, just as if one should mean nautical affairs one would address a seaman. With which men's business are they concerned, queries Socrates. Alkibiades responds assured that it is the affairs of the gentlemen (kalos kai agathos) to whom they must attend, and these are clearly the intelligent rather than the unintelligent.

Everyone is good only in that of which he has intelligence (125a). While the shoemaker is good at the manufacture of shoes, he is bad at the making of clothing. However, on that account the same man is both bad and good and one cannot uphold that the good man is at the same time bad (but cf. 116a). Alkibiades must clarify whom he means by the good man.

By altering the emphasis of the discussion to specific intelligence or skills, Socrates has effectively prevented Alkibiades from answering "gentlemen" again, even if he would think that the affairs of gentlemen in democracies are the affairs with which a good ruler should be concerned.

Given his purported ambitions, it is understandable that Alkibiades thinks good men are those with the power to rule in a polis (125b). Since there are a variety of subjects over which to rule, or hold power, Socrates wants to clarify that it is men and not, for example, horses, to which Alkibiades refers. Socrates undoubtedly knew that Alkibiades meant men instead of horses; the pestiness of the question attracts the attention of the reader and he is reminded of the famous analogy of the city made by Socrates in the Apology. Therein, the city is likened to a great horse (Apology 30e). It would thus not be wholly inappropriate to interpret this bizarre question in a manner which, though not apparent to Alkibiades, would provide a perhaps more meaningful analysis. Socrates might be asking Alkibiades if he intends to rule a city or to rule men (in a city). It is not altogether out of place to adopt the analogy here; corroborating support is given by the very subtle philosophic distinctions involved later in distinguishing ruling cities from ruling men (cf. 133e). For example, cities are not erotic, whereas men are; cities can attain self-sufficiency, whereas men cannot. It does not demand excessive reflection to see how erotic striving and the interdependency of men affects the issues of ruling them. What is good for a man, too, may differ from what is good for a city (as mentioned above with reference to wealth), and in some cases may even be incompatible with it. These are all issues which demand the consideration of rulers and political thinkers. Additional endorsement for the suitability of the

analogy between city and man for interpreting this passage, is provided by Socrates in his very next statement. He asks if Alkibiades means ruling over sick men (125b). Earlier (107b-c) the two had been discussing what qualified someone to give advice about a sick city.

Alkibiades doesn't mean good rule to be ruling men at sea or while they are harvesting (though generalship and farming, or defence and agriculture, are essential to a city). He also doesn't conclude that good rule is useful for men who are doing nothing (as Polemarkhos is driven to conclude that justice is useful for things that are not in use - Republic 333c-e). In a sense Alkibiades is right. Rulers rule men when they are doing things such as transacting business, and making use of each other and whatever makes up a political life (125c). But rule in a precise, but inclusive, sense is also rule over men when they are inactive. The thoughts and very dreams are ruled by the true rulers, who have controlled or understood all the influences upon men.

Socrates fastens onto one of these and tries to find out what kind of rule Alkibiades means by ruling over men who make use of men. Alkibiades does not mean the pilot's virtue of ruling over mariners who make use of rowers, nor does he mean the chorus teacher who rules flute players who lead singers and employ dancers;[122] Alkibiades means ruling men who share life as fellow citizens and conduct business. Socrates inquires as to which techne gives that ability as the pilot's techne gives the ability to rule fellow sailors, and the chorus teacher's ability to rule fellow singers. At this point the attentive reader notices that Socrates has slightly altered the example. He has introduced an element of equality. When the consideration of the polis was made explicit, the pilot and chorus teacher became "fellows" - "fellow sailors" and "fellow

singers." This serves at least to suggest that citizenship in the polis is an equalizing element in political life. To consider oneself a fellow citizen with another implies a kind of fraternity and equality that draws people together. Despite, say, the existence of differences within the city, people who are fellow citizens often are closer to each other than they are to outsiders who may otherwise be more similar.

There is another sense in which Socrates' shift to calling each expert a "fellow" illuminates something about the city. This is discovered when one wonders why Socrates employed two examples - the chorus teacher and the pilot.

One reason for using more than a single example is that there is more than one point to illustrate. It is then up to the reader to scrutinize the examples to see how they importantly differ. The onus is on the reader, and this is a tactic used often in the dialogues. Someone is much more likely to reflect upon something he discovered than something that is unearthed for him. One important distinction between these two technae is that a pilot is a "fellow sailor" in a way that the chorus teacher is not a "fellow singer." Even in the event a pilot shares in none of the work of the crew rules (as the chorus teacher need not actually sing), if the ship sinks, he sinks with it. So too does the ruler of a city fall when his city falls. This is merely one aspect of the analogy of the ship-of-state, but it suffices to remind one that the ruler of a polity must identify with the polity, perhaps even to the extent that he sees the fate of the polity as his fate (cf. Republic 412d).

Perhaps more importantly, there is a distinction between the chorus master and the pilot which significantly illuminates the task of political rule. A pilot directs sailors doing a variety of tasks that

make sailing possible, whereas the chorus master directed singers performing in unison. Perhaps political rule is properly understood as involving both.

Alkibiades suggests that the techne of the ruler (the fellow-citizen) is good counsel, but as the pilot gives good not evil counsel for the preservation of his passengers, Socrates tries to find out what end the good counsel of the ruler serves. Alkibiades proposed that the good counsel is for the better management and preservation of the polis (126a).

In the next stage of the discussion Socrates makes a number of moves that affect the outcome of the argument but he doesn't make a point of explicating them to Alkibiades. Socrates asks what it is that becomes present or absent with better management and preservation. He suggests that if Alkibiades were to ask him the same question with respect to the body, Socrates would reply that health became present and disease absent. That is not sufficient. He pretends Alkibiades would ask what happened in a better condition of the eyes, and he would reply that sight came and blindness went. So too deafness and hearing are absent and present when ears are improved and getting better treatment. Socrates would like Alkibiades, now, to answer as to what happens when a state is improved and has better treatment and management. Alkibiades thinks that friendship will be present and hatred and faction will be absent.

From the simple preservation of the passangers of a ship, Socrates has moved to preservation and better management, to improved and getting better treatment, to improvement, better treatment and management. Simple preservation, of course, is only good (and the goal of an appropriate techne) when the condition of a thing is pronounced to be satisfactory,

such that any change would be for the worse. In a ship the pilot only has to preserve the lives of his passengers by his techne, he does not have to either make lives or improve them. In so far as a city is involved with more than mere life, but is aiming at the good life, mere preservation of the citizens is not sufficient. Socrates' subtle transformation indicates the treatment necessary in politics.

Another point that Socrates has implicitly raised is the hierarchy of technae. This may be quite important to an understanding of politics and what it can properly order within its domain. Socrates employs the examples of the body and the eyes (126a-b). The eyes are, however, a part of the body. The body cannot be said to be healthy unless its parts, including the eyes, are healthy; the eyes will not see well in a generally diseased body. The two do interrelate, but have essentially different virtues. The virtue of the eyes and thus the techne attached to that virtue, are under/within the domain of the body and its virtue, health. The doctor, then, has an art of a different order than the optometrist. (The doctor and his techne may have competition for the care of the body; the gymnastics expert has already been met and he certainly has things to say about the management of the body - cf. 128c but the principle there would be a comprehensive techne.) Given the example of the relation of the parts to the whole, perhaps Socrates is suggesting that there is an analogue in the city: the health of the whole city and the sight of a part of the city. The reader is curious if the same relation would hold as to which techne had the natural priority over the other. Would the interests of the whole rule the interests of a part of the city?

Socrates' examples of the body and the part of the body could, in yet another manner, lead toward contemplation of the political. There is

a possible connection between all three. The doctor might well have to decide to sacrifice the sight of an eye in the interests of the whole body. Perhaps the ruler (the man possessing the political techne) would have to decide to sacrifice the health (or even life) of individuals (maybe even ones as important as the "eyes" of the city) for the well-being of the polis. Thus, analogously, the political art properly rules the various technae of the body.

Earlier the reader had occasion to be introduced to a system of hierarchies (108c-e). Therein he found that harping was ruled by music and wrestling by gymnastics. Gymnastics, as the techne of the body, is, it is suggested, ruled by politics. Perhaps music should also be ruled by politics. In the Republic, gymnastics is to the body roughly what music is to the soul. Both, however, are directed by politics and are a major concern of political men. It is fortunate for Alkibiades that he is familiar with harping and gymnastics (106e), so that as a politician he will be able to advise on their proper performance. One already has reason to suspect that the other subject in which Alkibiades took lessons is properly under the domain of politics.

Alkibiades believes that the better management of a state will bring friendship into it and remove hatred and faction. Socrates inquires if he means agreement or disagreement by friendship. Alkibiades replies that agreement is meant, but one must notice that this significantly reduces the area of concern to which Alkibiades had given voice. He had mentioned two kinds of strife, and one needn't think long and hard to notice that friendship normally connotes much more than agreement. Socrates next asks which techne causes states to agree about numbers; does the same art, arithmetic, cause individuals to agree among each other and with themselves. In addition to whatever suspicion one

entertains that this is not the kind of agreement Alkibiades meant when he thought friendship would be brought into a city with better management, one must keep in mind the similarity between this and an earlier argument (111c). In almost the same words, people agreed "with others or by themselves" and states agreed, with regard to speaking Greek, or more precisely, with naming. There are two features of this argument which should be explored. Firstly, one might reflect upon whether agreement between states is always essentially similar to agreement between people, or agreement with oneself. People can fool themselves and they can possess their own "language." Separate states may have separate weights and measures, say, but individuals within a state must agree. Secondly, there may be more than one kind of agreement with which the reader should be concerned in this dialogue. This might be most apparent were there different factors which compelled different people, in different circumstances, to agree. Men sometimes arrive at the same conclusions through different reasons.

The first two examples employed by Socrates illuminate both of these points. Arithmetic and mensuration are about as far apart as it is possible to be in terms of the nature of the agreement. Mensuration is simply convention or agreement, and yet its entire existence depends on people's knowing the standards agreed upon. Numbers, on the contrary, need absolutely no agreement (except linguistically in the names given to numbers) and no amount of agreement can change what they are and their relation to each other.

The third example represents the type of agreement much closer to that with which it is believed conventional politics is permeated. It is the example of the scales - long symbolic of justice. Agreement with people and states about weights on scales depends on a number of factors,

as does judgement about politics. There is something empirical to observe, namely the action as well as the various weights; there is a constant possibility of cheating (on one side or another) against which they must take guard; there is a judgement to be made which is often close, difficult and of crucial importance, and there is the general problem of which side of the scale/polity is to receive the goods, and what is the standard against which the goods are measured. To spell out only one politically important aspect of this last factor, consider the difference between deciding that a certain standard of life is to provide the measure for the distribution of goods, and deciding that a certain set of goods are to be distributed evenly without such a standard. In one case the well off would receive no goods, they being the standard; in the other case all would supposedly have an equal chance of receiving goods. Other political factors are involved in determining what should be weighed, what its value is, who should preside over the weighing, and what kind of scale is to be used. The third example, the scales, surely appears to be more pertinent to Socrates and Alkibiades than either of the other two, although one notices that both arithmetic and mensuration are involved in weighing.

Alkibiades is requested to make a spirited effort to tell Socrates what the agreement is, the art which achieves it, and whether all parties agree the same way. Alkibiades supposes it is the friendship of father and mother to child, brother to brother and woman to man (126e). A good ruler would be able to make the people feel like a family - their fellow citizens like fellow kin. This seems to be a sound opinion of Alkibiades; many actual cities are structured around families or clans or based on legends of common ancestry (cf. Republic 414c-415d). There is a

complication, however, which is not addressed by either participant in the dialogue. Socrates had suggested three parts to the analysis of agreement - its nature, the art that achieves it, and whether all agree in the same way. Alkibiades in his response suggests three types of friendship which may differ dramatically in all of the respects Socrates had mentioned. And the political significance of the three kinds of friendship also has different and very far-reaching effects. Consider the different ties, and feelings that characterize man-woman relationships. And imagine the different character of a regime that is patterned not on the parent-child relation, but instead characterized by male-female attraction!

In a dialogue on the nature of man in which there is already support for the notion that "descent" and "family" figure prominently in the analysis of man's nature, it seems likely that the three kinds of familial (or potentially familial) relationships mentioned here would be worthy of close and serious reflection. Socrates, however, does not take Alkibiades to task on this, but turns to an examination of the notion that friendship is agreement, and the question of whether or not they can exist in a polis. Socrates had himself suggested that Alkibiades meant agreement by friendship (126c), and in this argument that restricted sense of friendship plays a significant role in their arriving at the unpalatable conclusion. The argument leads to the assertion that friendship and agreement cannot arise in a state where each person does his own business.

Socrates asks Alkibiades if a man can agree with a woman about wool-working when he doesn't have knowledge of it and she does. And further, does he have any need to agree, since it is a woman's

accomplishment? A woman, too, could not come to agreement with a man about soldiering if she didn't learn it - and it is a business for men. There are some parts of knowledge appropriate to women and some to men on this account (127a) and in those skills there is no agreement between men and women and hence no friendship - if friendship is agreement. Thus men and women are not befriended by each other so far as they are performing their own jobs, and polities are not well-ordered if each person does his own business (127b). This conclusion is unacceptable to Alkibiades; he thinks a well-ordered polity is one abounding in friendship, but also that it is precisely each party doing his own business that brings such friendship into being. Socrates points out that this goes against the argument. He asks if Alkibiades means friendship can occur without agreement, or that agreement in something may arise when some have knowledge while others do not. These are presumably the steps in the argument which are susceptible to attack. Socrates incidentally provides another opening in the argument that could show the conclusion to be wrong. He points out that justice is the doing of one's own work and that justice and friendship are tied together. But Alkibiades, perhaps remembering his shame (109b-116d), does not pursue this angle, having learned that the topic of justice is difficult. In order to determine what, if anything, was wrongly said, various stages of the argument will now be examined.

By beginning with the consideration of why anyone would suppose a state was well-ordered when each person did his own business, one observes that otherwise every individual would argue about everything done by everybody. The reader may well share Alkibiades' suspicion that what makes a state well-ordered is that each does what he is capable of

and trusts the others to do the same. This indicates, perhaps, the major problems with the discussion between Socrates and Alkibiades. Firstly, there are many ways that friendship depends less upon agreement than on the lack of serious disagreement. Secondly, agreement can occur, or be taken for granted, in a number of ways other than by both parties having knowledge.

As revealed earlier in the dialogue, Alkibiades would readily trust an expert in steering a ship as well as in fancy cooking (117c-d). Regardless of whether it was a man's or a woman's task, he would agree with the expert because of his skill. In these instances he agreed precisely because he had no knowledge and they did. Of course, faith in expertise may be misplaced, or experts may lose perspective in understanding the position of their techne relative to others. But though concord and well-ordered polities do not necessarily arise when people trust in expertise, friendship and agreement can come about through each man's doing his own business.

Agreement between people, thus, may come about when one recognizes his ignorance. It may also arise through their holding similar opinion on the issue, or when one holds an opinion compatible with knowledge possessed by another. For example, a woman may merely have opinions about soldiering, but those opinions may allow for agreement with men, who alone can have knowledge. Soldiering is a man's work, but while men are at war the women may wonder about what they are doing, or read stories about the war, or form opinions from talking to other soldiers' wives, or have confidence in what their soldier-husbands tell them. There is also a sense in which, if war is business for men, women don't even need opinions about how it is conducted for they are not on the

battlefield. They need only agree on its importance and they need not even necessarily agree on why it is important (unless they are raising sons). Women will often agree with men about waging war on grounds other than the men's. For example, glory isn't a prime motivator for most women's complying with their husbands' desires to wage war. It has been suggested that agreement may arise on the basis of opinion and not knowledge, and further that opinions need not be similar, merely compatible. As long as the war is agreed to by both sexes, friendship will be in evidence regardless of their respective views of the motives of war.

Apathy or some other type of disregard for certain kinds of work may also eliminate disagreement and discord, provided that it isn't a result of lack of respect for the person's profession. For example, a man and a woman might never disagree about wool-working He may not care how a spindle operates and would not think of interfering. And he certainly wouldn't have to be skilled at the techne of wool-working to agree with his wife whenever she voiced her views - his agreement with her would rest on his approval of the resulting coat.

Socrates has not obtained from Alkibiades' speech the power to learn what the nature of the friendship is that good men must have. Alkibiades, invoking all the gods (he cannot be sure who has dominion over the branch of knowledge he is trying to identify), fears that he doesn't even know what he says, and has for some time been in a very disgraceful condition. But Socrates reminds him that this is the correct time for Alkibiades to perceive his condition, not at the age of fifty, for then it would be difficult to take the proper care. In answering Alkibiades' question as to what he should do now that he is aware of his condition, Socrates replies he need only answer the questions Socrates

puts to him. With the favor of the god (if they can trust in Socrates' divination - cf. 107b, 115a) both of them shall be improved.

What Socrates may have just implied is that while Alkibiades' speech is unable to supply the power to even name the qualities of a good man, Socratic speech in itself has the power to actually make them better. All Alkibiades must do is respond to the questions Socrates asks. The proper use of language, it is suggested, has the power to make good men. One may object that speech cannot have that effect upon a listener who is not in a condition of recognizing his ignorance, but one must also recognize that speech has the power to bring men to that realization. Almost half of the First Alkibiades is overtly devoted to this task. Indeed it seems unlikely that people perceive their plight except through some form of the human use of language except when they are visually able to compare themselves to others. It would be difficult to physically coerce men into perceiving their condition. An emotional attempt to draw a person's awarness - such as a mother's tears at her son's plight - needs speech to direct it; the son must learn what has upset her. Speech is also necessary to point to an example of a person who has come to a realization of his ignorance. Socrates or someone like him, might discern his condition by himself, but even he surely spent a great deal of time conversing with others to see that their confidence in their opinions was unfounded. In any event, what is important for the understanding of the First Alkibiades is that Socrates has succeeded in convincing Alkibiades that thoughtful dialogue is more imperative for him at this point than Athenian politics.

Together they set out to discover (cf. 109e) what is required to take proper care of oneself; in the event that they have never previously

done so, they will assume complete ignorance. For example, perhaps one takes care of oneself while taking care of one's things (128a). They are not sure but Socrates will agree with Alkibiades at the end of the argument that taking proper care of one's belongings is an art different from care of oneself (128d). But perhaps one should survey the entire argument before commenting upon it.

Alkibiades doesn't understand the first question as to whether a man takes care of feet when he takes care of what belongs to his feet, so Socrates explains by pointing out that there are things which belong to the hand. A ring, for example, belongs to nothing but a finger. So too a shoe belongs to a foot and clothes to the body. Alkibiades still doesn't understand what it means to say that taking care of shoes is taking care of feet, so Socrates employs another fact. One may speak of taking correct care of this or that thing, and taking proper care makes something better. The art of shoemaking makes shoes better and it is by that art that we take care of shoes. But it is by the art of making feet better, not by shoemaking, that we improve feet. That art is the same art whereby the whole body is improved, namely gymnastic.

Gymnastic takes care of the foot; shoemaking takes care of what belongs to the foot. Gymnastic takes care of the hand; ring engraving takes care of what belongs to the hand. Gymnastic takes care of the body; weaving and other crafts take care of what belongs to the body. Thus taking care of a thing and taking care of its belongings involve separate arts. Socrates repeats this conclusion after suggesting that taking care of one's belongings does not mean one takes care of oneself.

Further support is here recognized, in this dialogue, for a hierarchical arrangement of the <u>technae</u>, but that simultaneously somewhat

qualifies the conclusion of the argument. Gymnastic is the art of taking care of the body and it thus must weave into a pattern all of the arts of taking care of the belongings of the body and of its parts. Its very control over those arts, however, indicates that they are of some importance to the body. Because they have a common superior goal, the taking care of the body, they are not as separate as the argument would suggest. Just as shoes in bad repair can harm feet, shoes well made may improve feet (cf. 121d, for shaping the body). They are often made in view of the health or beauty of the body as are clothes and rings. Because things which surround one affect one, as one's activities and one's reliance on some sorts of possessions affect one, proper care for the belongings of the body may improve one's body.[123]

Socrates continues. Even if one cannot yet ascertain which art takes care of oneself, one can say that it is not an art concerned with improving one's belongings, but one that makes one better. Further, just as one couldn't have known the art that improves shoes or rings if one didn't know a shoe or a ring, so it is impossible that one should know the techna that makes one better if one doesn't know oneself (124a). Socrates asks if it is easy to know oneself and that therefore the writer at Delphi was not profound, or if it is a difficult thing and not for everybody. Alkibiades replies that it seems sometimes easy and sometimes hard. Thereupon Socrates suggests that regardless of its ease or difficulty, knowledge of oneself is necessary in order to know what the proper care of oneself is. It may be inferred from this that most people do not know themselves and are not in a position to know what the proper care of themselves is. They might be better off should they adopt the opinions of those who know, or be cared for by those who know more.

In order to understand themselves, the two men must find out how, generally, the 'self' of a thing can be seen (129b), Alkibiades figures Socrates has spoken correctly about the way to proceed, but instead of thus proceeding, Socrates interrupts in the name of Zeus[124] and asks whether Alkibiades is talking to Socrates and Socrates to Alkibiades. Indeed they are. Thus Socrates says, he is the talker and Alkibiades the hearer. This is a thoroughly baffling interruption, for not only is its purpose unclear, but it is contradictory. They have just agreed that both were talking.

Socrates pushes onward. Socrates uses speech in talking (one suspects that most people do). Talking and using speech are the same thing, but the user and the thing he uses are not the same thing. A shoemaker who cuts uses tools, but is himself quite different from a tool; so also is a harper not the same as what he uses when harping.

The shoemaker uses not only tools but his hands and his eyes, so, if the user and the thing used are different, then the shoemaker and harper are different from the hands and eyes they use. So too, since man uses his whole body, he must be different from his body. Man must be the user of the body, and it is the soul which uses and rules the body. No one, he claims, can disagree with the remark that man is one of three things.[125] Alkibiades may or may not disagree, but he needs a bit of clarification. Man must be soul, or body, or both as one whole. Already admitted is the proposition that it is man that rules the body, and the argument has shown that the body is ruled by something else, so the body deesn't rule itself. What remains is the soul.

The unlikeliest thing in the world is the combination of both, Socrates suggests (130b), for if one of the combined ones was said not to

share in the rule, then the two obviously could not rule. It is not necessary to point out to the reader that the possibility of a body's share in the rule was never denied, nor to indicate that what Socrates ostensibly regards as the unlikeliest thing of all, is what it seems most reasonable to suspect to be very like the truth. Emotions and appetites, so closely connected with the body, are a dominant and dominating part of one's life. They account for a major part of people's lives, and even to a large extent influence their reason (a faculty which most agree is not tied to the body in the same way). The soul might be seen to be at least partly ruled by the body if it is appetites and emotions which affect whether or not reason is used and influence what kind of decisions will be rationally determined.

Anyhow, according to Socrates, if it is not the body, or the combined body and soul, then man must either be nothing at all, or he must be the soul (130c). But the reader is aware that only on the briefest of glances does this square with "the statement that no one could dissent to," (cf. 130a). Man cannot be 'nothing' according to that statement any more than he can be anything else whatsoever, such as 'dog,' 'gold,' 'dream,' etc. 'Nothing' was not one of the alternatives.

Alkibiades swears that he needs no clearer proof that the soul is man, and ruler of the body, but Socrates, overruling the authority of Alkibiades' oath, responds that the proof is merely tolerable, sufficing only until they discover that which they have just passed by because of its complexity. Unaware that anything had been by-passed (Socrates had interrupted that part of the discussion with his first conventional oath - 129b), the puzzled Alkibiades asks Socrates. He receives the reply that they haven't been considering what generally makes the self of a

thing discoverable, but have been looking at particular cases (130d; cf. 129b). Perhaps that will suffice, for the soul surely must be said to have a more absolute possession of us than anything else.

So, whenever Alkibiades and Socrates converse with each other, it is soul conversing with soul; the souls using words (130d.1). Socrates, when he uses speech, talks with Alkibiades' soul, not his face. Socratic speech is thus essentially different from the speech of the crowds of suitors who conversed with Alkibiades (103a, cf. also 106b). If Socrates' soul talks with Alkibiades' soul and if Alkibiades is truly listening, then it is Alkibiades' soul, not one of his belongings that hears Socrates (cf. 129b-c). Someone who says "know thyself" (cf. 124a, 129a) means "know thy soul"; knowing the things that belong to the body means knowing what is his, but not what he is.

The reader will note how the last two steps of the argument subtly, yet definitely, indicate the ambiguous nature of the body's position in this analysis. Someone who knows only the belongings of the body will not know the man. According to the argument proper, someone who knew the body, too, would still only know a man's possessions, not his being.

Socrates continues, pressing the argument to show that no doctor or trainer, insofar as he is a doctor or a trainer, knows himself. Farmers and tradesmen are still more remote, for their arts teach only what belongs to the body (which is itself only a possession of the man) and not the man (131a). Indeed, most people recognize a man by his body, not by his soul, which reveals his true nature.

Socrates pauses briefly to introduce consideration of a virtue.[126] Seemingly out of the blue, he remarks that "if knowing oneself is temperance" then no craftsman is temperate by his techne (131b). Because

of this the good man disdains to learn the technae. This sudden introduction of the virtue, defining temperance as self-knowledge, will assume importance later in the dialogue (e.g., at 133c).

Returning to the argument, Socrates proposes that one who cares for the body cares for his possessions. One who cares for his money cares not for himself, nor for his possessions, but for something yet more remote. He has ceased to do his own business.

Those who love Alkibiades' body don't love Alkibiades but his possessions. The real lover is the one who loves his soul. The one who loves the body would depart when the body's bloom is over,[127] whereas the lover of the soul remains as long as it still tends to the better. Socrates is the one that remained; the others left when the bloom of the body was over. Silently accepting this insult to his looks, one of his possessions, Alkibiades recognizes the compliment paid to himself. The account of the cause of Socrates' remaining and the others' departure, however, has changed somewhat from the beginning (103b, 104c). Then the lovers left because a quality of Alkibiades' soul was too much for them (but not for Socrates) to handle. Now it is a decline in a quality of the body that apparently caused them to depart, but it is still an appreciation of the soul that retains Socrates' interest.

Perhaps the significance of this basic shift is to indicate to Alkibiades the true justification for his self-esteem. His highmindedness was based on his physical qualities and their possessions, not on his soul. Socrates may be insulting the other lovers, but he is at the same time making it difficult for Alkibiades to lose his pride in the things of the body. Thus Socrates' reinterpretation of the reasons for the lovers' departure reinforces the point of the argument, namely that

one's soul is more worthy of attention and consideration than one's body.

Alkibiades is glad that Socrates has stayed and wants him to remain. He shall, at Socrates' request, endeavour to remain as handsome as he can. So Alkibiades, the son of Kleinias, "has only one lover and that a cherished one,"[128] Socrates, son of Sophroniskos and Phainarite. Now Alkibiades knows why Socrates alone did not depart. He loves Alkibiades, not merely what belongs to Alkibiades (131e).

Socrates will never forsake Alkibiades as long as he (his soul) is not deformed by the Athenian people. In fact that is what especially concerns Socrates. His greatest fear is that Alkibiades will be damaged through becoming a lover of the demos - it has happened to many good Athenians. The face (not the soul?) of the "people of great-hearted Erekhtheos" is fair, but to see the demos stripped is another thing. As the dialogue approaches its end, Socrates becomes poetic in his utterances. On this occasion he prophetically quotes Homer (Iliad II, 547). When listing the participants on the Akhaian side of the Trojan War, Homer describes the leader of the Athenians, the "people of the great-hearted Erekhtheos," as one like no other born on earth for the arrangement and ordering of horses and fighters. Alkibiades would become famous for his attempts to order poleis and his arranging of naval military forces.

In the Gorgias, Scorates relates a myth about the final judgement of men, and one of the interesting features of the story is that the judges and those to be judged are stripped of clothes and bodies (Gorgias 523a-527e).[129] All that is judged is the soul. This allows the judges to perceive the reality beneath the appearance that a body and its belongings provide. Flatterers (120b) would not be as able to get to the

Blessed Isles, although actually, in political regimes, living judges are often fooled by appearances. Judges too are stripped so that they could see soul to soul (133b; cf. Gorgias 523d), and would be less likely to be moved by rhetoric, poetry, physical beauty or any other of the elements that are tied to the body through, for example, the emotions and appetites. It seems thus good advice for anyone who desires to enter politics that he get a stripped view of the demos. In addition, those familiar with the myth in the Gorgias might recognize the importance of Alkibiades stripping himself, and coming to know his own soul, before he enters politics.

Socrates is advising Alkibiades to take the proper precautions. He is to exercise seriously, learning all that must be known prior to an entry into politics (132b). Presumably this knowledge will counteract the charm of the people. Alkibiades wants to know what the proper exercises are, and Socrates says they have established one important thing and that is knowing what to take care of. They will not inadvertently be caring for something else, such as, for example, something that only belongs to them. The next step, now that they know upon what to exercise, is to care for the soul and leave the care of the body and its possessions to others.

If they could discover how to obtain knowledge of the soul, they would truly "know themselves." For the third time Socrates refers to the Delphic inscription (132c; 124a, 129a) and he claims he has discovered another interpretation of it which he can illustrate only by the example of sight. Should someone say "see thyself" to one's eye, the eye would have to look at something, like a mirror, or the thing in the eye that is like a mirror (132d-e). The pupil of the eye reflects the face of

the person looking into it like a mirror. Looking at anything else (except mirrors, water, polished shields, etc.) won't reflect it. Just as the eye must look into another eye to see itself, so must a soul look into another soul. In addition it must look to that very part of the soul which houses the virtue of a soul - wisdom - and any part like wisdom (133b; cf. 131b). The part of the soul containing knowledge and thought is the most divine, and since it thus resembles god, whoever sees it will recognize all that is divine and will get the greatest knowledge of himself.

In order to see one's own soul properly, then, Socrates suggests that it is necessary to look into another's soul. Alkibiades must look into someone's soul to obtain knowledge of himself, and he must possess knowledge of himself in order to be able to rule himself. This last is a prerequisite for ruling others. Since it lacks a 'pupil,' the soul doesn't have a readily available window/mirror for observing another's soul, as the eye does for observing oneself through another's eye. Such vision of souls can only be had through speech. Through honest dialogue with trusted friends and reflection upon what was said and done, one may gain a glimpse of their soul. The souls must be "stripped" so that words are spoken and heard truly. Socrates, by being the only lover who remained, and, having shown his value to Alkibiades, will continue to speak (104e, 105e). He is offering Alkibiades a look at his soul.

This is in keeping, it appears, with the advice that Alkibiades look to the rational part of the soul. Socrates is the picture of the rational man; through his speech the reader is also offered the opportunity to try to see into Socrates' soul to better understand his own. Again, as discussed above, a man's nature can be understood by looking

to the example of the best, even if it is only an imitation of the best in Dialogues.

Socrates now recalls the earlier mention of temperance as though they had come to some conclusion regarding the nature of the virtue. They had supposedly agreed that self-knowledge was temperance (133c; cf. 131b). Lacking self-knowledge or temperance, one could not know one's belongings, whether they be good or evil. Without knowing Alkibiades one could not know if his belongings are his. Ignorance of one's belongings prohibits familiarity with the belongings of belongings (133d). Socrates reminds Alkibiades that they have been incorrect in admitting people could know their belongings if they didn't know themselves (133d-e).

This latter argument raises at least two difficulties. Firstly, it renders problematic the suggestion that one should leave one's body and belongings in another's care (132c). These others, it seems, would be doctors and gymnastics trainers - the only experts of the body explicitly recognized in the dialogue. Remembering that neither doctor or trainer knows himself (131a), one might wonder how he can know Socrates' and Alkibiades' belongings. He cannot, according to the argument here (133c-d) know his own belongings without knowing himself and he cannot be familiar with others' belongings while ignorant of his own.

The argument, secondly, creates a problem with the understanding heretofore suggested about how men generally conduct their lives. Most people do not know themselves and do not properly care for themselves. The argument of the dialogue has intimated that they in fact care for their belongings. Thus it would seem that, in some sense, they do know their belongings, just as Alkibiades' lovers, ignorant of Alkibiades and probably ignorant of themselves, still know that Alkibiades' body

belonged to Alkibiades. And they knew, like he knew (104a-c) that his looks and his wealth belong to his body. The reader might conclude from this that the precise knowledge they do not have is knowledge either of what the belongings should be like, or what their true importance and proper role in a man's life should be. Knowledge of one's soul would consist, partly, in knowing how to properly handle one's belongings. That allows one to do what is right, and not merely do what one likes.

It is the task of one man and one techne (the chief techne in the hierarchy) to grasp himself, his belongings, and their belongings. Someone who doesn't know his belongings won't know other mens'. And if he doesn't know theirs, he won't know those of the polity.

This last remark raises the consideration of what constitutes the belongings of a polity. And that immediately involves one in reflection upon whether the city has a body, and a soul. What is the essence of the city? The reader is invited to explore the analogy to the man, but even more, it is suggested that he is to reflect upon how to establish the priority of one over the other. This invitation is indicated by the discussion of the one techne that presides over all the bodies and belongings. The relation of the city to the individual man has been of perennial concern to political thinkers, and a most difficult aspect of the problem terrain involves the very understanding of the City and Man (cf. 125b).

The question is multiplied threefold with the possibility that an adequate understanding of the city requires an account of its soul, its body and its body's belongings. An account of man, it has been suggested in this dialogue, demands knowing his soul, body, possessions, and the proper relation and ordering of each. It is quite possible that what is

best for a man will conflict with what is best for a city. The city might be considered best off if it promotes an average well-being. Having its norm, or median, slightly higher than the norm of the next city would indicate it was better off. It is also possible that the circumstances within which each and every man thrives would not necessarily bring harmony to a city.

The problem of priority is further complicated by the introduction of the notion that the welfare of each citizen is not equally important to the city. Perhaps what is best for a city is to have one class of its members excel, or to have it produce one great man. What is to be understood as the good of the city's very soul?

Furthermore, even if the welfare of the whole city is to be identified with the maximum welfare of each citizen, it might still be the case that the policies of the city need to increase the welfare of a few people. For example, in time of war the welfare of the whole polity depends on the welfare of a few men, the armed forces. As long as war is a threat, the good of the city (its body, soul, or possessions) could depend on the exceptional treatment of one class of its men.

Knowledge of the true nature of the polity is essential for political philosophy and so for proper political decision-making. Men ignorant of the polity, the citizens, or themselves cannot be statesmen or economists (133e; cf. Statesman 258e). Such a man, ignorant of his and others' affairs will not know what he is doing, therefore making mistakes and doing ill in private and for the demos. He and they will be wretched.

Temperance and goodness are necessary for well-being, so it is bad men who are wretched. Those who attain temperance not those who

become wealthy, are released from this misery.[130] Similarly, cities need virtue for their well-being, not walls, triremes, arsenals, numbers or size (134b; The full impact of this will be felt if one remembers that this dialogue is taking place immediately prior to the outbreak of the war with Sparta. Athens is in full flurry of preparation, for she has seen the war coming for a number of years). Proper management of the polis by Alkibiades would be to impart virtue to the citizens and he could not impart it without having it (134c).[131] A good governor has to acquire the virtue first. Alkibiades shouldn't be looking for power as it is conventionally understood - the ability to do whatever one pleases - but he should be looking for justice and temperance. If he and the state acted in accordance with those two virtues, they would please god; their eyes focussed on the divine, they will see and know themselves and their good. If Alkibiades would act this way, Socrates would be ready to guarantee his well-being (134e). But if he acts with a focus on the godless and dark, through ignorance of humself his acts will go godless and dark.

Alkibiades has received the Socratic advice to forget about power as he understands it, in the interest of having real power over at least himself. Conventionally understood, and in most applications of it, power is the ability to do what one thinks fit (Gorgias 469d). Various technae give to the skilled the power to do what they think fit to the material on which they are working. The technae, however, are hierarchically arranged, some ruling others. That is, some are archetectonic with respect to others. What is actually fit for each techne is dictated by a logically prior techne. The techne with the most power is the one that dictates to the other techne what is fit and what is not. This understanding seems to disclose two elements of power: the ability to do

what one thinks is fit, and knowing what is fit.

If a man can do what he wants but is lacking in intelligence, the result is likely to be disastrous (135a; Republic 339a-e, Gorgias 469b, 470a). If a man with tyrannical power were sick and he couldn't even be talked to, his health would be destroyed. If he knew nothing about navigation, a man exercising tyrannical power as a ship's pilot may well cause all on board to perish.[132] Similarly in a state a power without excellence or virtue will fare badly.

It is not tyrannical power that Alkibiades should seek but virtue, if he would fare well, and until the time he has virtue, it is better, more noble and appropriate for a man, as for a child, to be governed by a better than to try to govern; part of being 'better' includes knowledge that right rule is in the subject's interest. It is appropriate for a bad man to be a slave; vice befits a slave, virtue a free man (135c; it seems strange that vice should be appropriate for anyone, slave or free, perhaps, rather, it defines a slave). One should most certainly avoid all slavery and if one can perceive where one stands, it may not at present be on the side of the free (135c). Socrates must indicate to Alkibiades the importance of a clearer understanding of both what he desires, power, and what this freedom is. In a conventional, and ambiguous sense, the man with the most freedom is the king or tyrant who is not subject to anyone. Socrates must educate Alkibiades. The man who wants power like the man who seeks freedom, doesn't know substantively what he is looking for; the only power worth having comes with wisdom, which alone can make one free.

Socrates confides to Alkibiades that his condition ought not to be named since he is a noble (kalos) man (cf. 118b - is this another

condition which will remain unnamed despite their solitude?). Alkibiades must endeavour to escape it. If Socrates will it, Alkibiades replies, he will try. To this Socrates responds that it is only noble to say "if god wills it." This appears to be Socrates' pious defence to a higher power. However, since he has drawn attention to the phrase himself, a reminder may be permitted to the effect that it is not necessarily quite the conventional piety to which he refers: a strange parade of deities has been presented for the reader's review in this dialogue.

Alkibiades is eager to agree and wants, fervently, to trade places with Socrates (135d). From now on Alkibiades will be attending Socrates. Alkibiades, this time, will follow and observe Socrates in silence. For twenty years Socrates has been silent toward Alkibiades, and now, thinking it appropriate to trade places, Alkibiades recognizes that silence on his part will help fill his true, newly found needs.

In the noise-filled atmosphere of today, it is especially difficult to appreciate (and thus to find an audience that appreciates) the importance of the final aspect of language that will be discussed in connection with knowledge and power - silence. The use of silence for emphasis is apparently known to few. But note how a moment of silence on the television draws one's attention, whether or not the program was being followed. And an indication of a residual respect for the power of silence is that one important manner of honoring political actors and heroes is to observe a moment of silence. Think, too, how judicious use of silence can make someone ill at ease, or cause them to re-examine their speech. The words "ominous" and "heavy" may often be appropriately used to describe silence. Silence can convey knowledge as well as power, and as the above examples may serve to show, it may have a significant

role in each. When one begins to examine the role of silence in the lives of the wise and the powerful, one begins to see some of the problems of a loud society.

To start with, the reader acquaints himself with the role of silence in political power. As witnessed in the dialogue, and, as well, in modern regimes, there are many facets of this. Politicians must be silent about much. Until recently, national defence was an acceptable excuse for silence on the part of the leaders of a country. The existence of a professional "news" gathering establishment necessitates that this silence be total, and not only merely with respect to external powers, for some things that the enemy must not know must be kept from the citizens as well (cf. 109c, 124a).

Politicians are typically silent about some things in order to attain office, and about even more things in order to retain it. Dissenters prudently keep quiet in order to remain undetained or even alive. Common sense indeed dictates that one observe a politic silence on a wide variety of occasions. Men in the public eye may conceal their disbelief in religious authority in the interests of those in the community who depend on religious conviction for their good conduct. Most consider lying in the face of the enemy to be in the interests of the polity, and all admire man who keeps silent even in the face of severe enemy torture. Parents often keep silent to protect their children, either when concerned about outsiders or about the more general vulnerability of those unable to reason.

One important political use of silence is in terms of the myths and fables related to children. Inestimable damage may be done when the "noble lie" that idealistically structures the citizen's understanding

of his regime is repudiated in various respects by the liberal desire to expose all to the public in the interests of enlightenment. At the point where children are shown that the great men they look up to are "merely human," one most clearly sees the harm that may be done by breaking silence. Everybody becomes really equal, despite appearances to the contrary, since everyone - even the heroes - acts from deep, irrational motives, appetites, fears, etc. High ideals and motives for action are debunked.

Since many of the political uses of silence mentioned above concern appropriate silence about things known, the next brief discussion will focus on silence and knowledge. The primary aspect of the general concern for silence in the life devoted to the pursuit of knowledge is a function of the twin features of political awareness and political concern. Though closely tied to the aforementioned appropriate uses of silence, this is concerned less with the disclosure of unsalutary facts about the life and times of men than with questions and truths of a higher order. For example, if it could be discerned that man's condition was abysmal, that he would inevitably become decadent, it would not be politically propitious to announce the fact on the eight-o'clock newscast. There seem to be at least two situations in which such facts are revealed. A politically unaware man might not realize it; a politically aware but somehow unconcerned man might not care about the well-being of the community as a whole.

There are at least two additional respects in which silence is important to the life of knowledge. Both play a part in Alkibiades' education in the First Alkibiades and contribute to his desire to trade places with Socrates. Firstly one must be silent to learn what others have to

say. On the face of it, this seems a trivial and fairly obvious thing to say. However when one appreciates the importance of trust and friendship in philosophic discourse, one perceives that the notion of silence important to this aspect of learning is much broader than the mere logistics of taking turns speaking. To mention only a single example, one has to prove one's ability to "keep one's mouth shut" in order to develop the kind of trust essential to frank discussion among dialogic partners.

Secondly, silence enhances mystery if there is reason to suspect that the silent know more than they have revealed. This attraction to the mysterious accounts for many things, including to mention only one example, the great appeal of detective stories. If both witnesses and the author did not know more than they let on in the beginning, if the reader/detective did not have to take great care in extracting the truth from muddled accounts, it is not likely that the genre would have the enduring readership it now enjoys.

Both of these might be tied directly to Socrates' initial silence toward Alkibiades. Socrates had kept quiet until Alkibiades had reached a certain stage in the development of his ambition. His prolonged silence, and then his repeated reminders of it, as he begins to speak, increases Alkibiades' curiosity. As it becomes more and more apparent to Alkibiades that Socrates knows what he is talking about, Alkibiades becomes increasingly desirous of learning. He wants Socrates to reveal the truth to him, the truth he suspects Socrates is keeping to himself (e.g., 124b, 132b, 127e, 119c, 130d, 131d, 135d). Throughout the discussion the men discuss ever more important subjects and it is readily apparent that their mutual trust grows at least partly because of their

recognition of what is appropriately kept silent (e.g., 109c, 118b, 135c). In addition, at yet another level, it has been frequently observed that Socrates' silence ragarding a part of the truth, or the necessity of an example, or a segment of the argument, indicates to the careful reader a greater depth to the issues. Recognition of this silence increases the philosophic curiosity of the readers as he attempts to discover both the subject of, and the reason for, the silence.

Alkibiades has suggested that he shall switch "places" with Socrates. Socrates has attended on him for all this time and now Alkibiades wants to follow Socrates. This is only one of a number of "switches" that occur in the turning around of Alkibiades, witnessed only by Socrates and the careful reader.

In the beginning Socrates says that the lovers of Alkibiades left because his qualities of soul were too overpowering. He is flattering Alkibiades in order, perhaps, to entice Alkibiades to begin listening. In the end he suggests they ceased pursuing the youth because the bloom of his beauty (the appearance of his body) has departed from him. At first glance this is not complimentary at all. Nevertheless it is now that Alkibiades claims to want very much to remain and listen. He will even bear insults silently.

At the start Alkibiades is haughty, superior and self-sufficient. In the end he wishes to please Socrates, recognizing his need for the power of speech in his coming to know himself. At first he believes he already knows, and arguments seem extraneous. By the end he wants to talk over the proper care of his soul at length with Socrates.

Probably the most notable turning around in the dialogue is the lover-beloved switch between the beginning and the end (cf. also

Symposium 217d). But a number of puzzling features come to the fore when one attempts to draw out the implications of the change. In what way is their attraction switched? Socrates is attracted to Alkibiades' unquenchable eros. Perhaps a mark of its great will for power is that it is now directed toward Socrates. However, what does that suggest about Socrates' eros in turn, either in terms of its strength or its direction? What kind of eros is attracted to a most powerful eros which in turn is directed back to it? Do Socrates and Alkibiades both have the same intensity of desires and are their ambitions not directed toward the same ends?

Perhaps Socrates' answer will suffice. He is pleased with the well-born man. His eros is like a stork - he has hatched a winged eros and it returned to care for him. (This is the first indication that Socrates assumes responsibility for the form of Alkibiades' desires; it also indicates another whole series of problems regarding how Alkibiades will "care for" Socrates). They are kindred souls (or at least have kindred eros), and their relationship is now one of mutual aid. Socrates will look into Alkibiades' soul to find his own and Alkibiades will peer into Socrates' soul in attempting to discern his. The reader is implicitly invited to look too; he has the privilege starting again and examining the souls more closely each time he returns to the beginning.

Alkibiades agrees that that is the situation in which they find themselves and he will immediately begin to be concerned with justice. Socrates wishes he'll continue, but expresses a great fear. In an ironic premonition of both their fates, he says he doesn't distrust Alkibiades' nature, but, being able to see the might of the state (cf. 132a), he fears that both of them will be overpowered.

Concluding Remarks

There is always an irony involved in concluding an essay on a Platonic dialogue. The most fitting ending, it seems, would be to whet one's appetite for more. This I shall attempt to do by pointing out an intriguing feature about the dialogue in general. If one were to look at the Platonic corpus as a kind of testament to Socrates, a story by Plato of a Socrates made young and beautiful regardless of their historical accuracy. For example, the Theaitetos, Sophist and Statesman all take place at approximately the same time, shortly before Socrates' trial. Similarly, the Euthyphro and Apology occur about then. The Crito and Phaido follow shortly thereafter, and so on. The First Alkibiades has its own special place. The First Alkibiades may well be the dialogue in which Socrates makes his earliest appearance.[133] The Platonic tradition has presented us with this as our introduction to Socrates, to philosophy. Why? This dialogue marks the first Socratic experience with philosophy that we may witness. Why? The fateful first meeting between Socrates and Alkibiades is also our first meeting with Socrates. Why? The reader's introduction to the philosopher and to philosophizing is in a conversation about a contest for the best man. Why? One must assume that, for some reason, Plato thought this fitting.[134]

FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. Plato, Republic 377a.9-10. The dialogue is known as the First Alkibiades, Alkibiades I and Alkibiades Major. Its title in Greek is simply Alkibiades but the conventional titles enable us to distinguish it from the other dialogue called Alkibiades. Stephanus pagination in the text of this thesis refers to the First Alkibiades of Plato. The Loeb text (translated by W. Lamb, 1927) formed the core of the reading. However, whenever a significant difference was noted between the Lamb translation and that of Thomas Sydenham (circa 1800), my own translation forms the basis of the commentary. Unless otherwise noted, all other works referred to are by Plato.

2. The major sources for Alkibiades' life are Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch and Plato. It seems to be the case that no history can be "objective." Since one cannot record everything, a historian must choose what to write about. Their choice is made on the basis of their opinion of what is important and therein vanishes the "objectivity" so sought after but always kept from modern historians. The superiority of the accounts of the men referred to above lies partially in that they do not pretend to that "value-neutral" goal, even though their perspective may nonetheless be impartial.

I wish to take this opportunity to emphasize the limited importance of the addition of this sketch of the historical Alkibiades. Were it suggested that such a familiarity were essential to the understanding of the dialogue, it would be implied that the dialogue as it stands is insufficient, and that I was in a position to remedy that inadequacy. As a rule of thumb in interpretation one should not begin with such presuppositions. However, there are a number of ways in which the reading of the dialogue is enriched by knowing the career of Alkibiades. For example, the reader who doesn't know that Alkibiades' intrigues with (and illegitimate son by) the Spartan queen was a cause of his fleeing from Sparta and a possible motive for his assassination, would not have a full appreciation of the comment by Socrates on the security placed around the Spartan queens (121b-c). At all events, extreme caution is necessary so that extra historical baggage will not be imported into the dialogue. It might be quite easy to prematurely evaluate the historical Alkibiades, and thereby misunderstand the dialogue.

3. We are also told she had dresses worth fifty minae (123c).

4. Plutarch, Life of Alkibiades, I.1 (henceforth referred to simply as Plutarch); Plato, Alkibiades I, 112c, 124c, 118d-e.

5. Plutarch, II. 4-6.

6. Diodoros Siculus, Diodoros of Sicily, XII. 38. iii-iv (henceforth Diodoros).

7. This is the Anytos who was Socrates' accuser. He was also notorious in Athens for being the first man to bribe a jury (composed of 500 men)! He had been charged with impiety. Some suspect that Alkibiades' preference for Socrates caused Anytos to be jealous and that this was a motive for his accusation of Socrates.

8. Plutarch, IV. 5.

9. The historical accuracy of the representation is impossible to determine and, so far as we need be concerned, philosophically irrelevant.

10. Actually Alkibiades admits this in a dialogue which Plato wrote (cf. Symposium 212c-223b, esp. 215a, ff.).

11. Plutarch, VI. 1.

12. Plato, Symposium 219e-220e; Plutarch VII. 3.

13. Plato, Symposium 220e-221c; Plutarch VII. 4; Diadoros XIII. 69. i-70. vi; cf. Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, IV 89-101 (henceforth: Thucydides).

14. Thucydudes, V. 40-48.

15. Cf. also Plutarch, X. 2-3.

16. Plutarch, XIV. 6-9; Thucydides V. 45.

17. Plutarch, XIII. 3-5. Cf. Aristotle's discussion in his Politics, 1284a15-b35; 1288a25-30; 1302b5-22; 1308b15-20.

18. Thucydides, VI. 16-18.

19. Diodoros, XII. 84. i-iii; Thucydides, VI. 9-25, 8-15.

20. Thucydides, VI. 25.

21. Plutarch, XVIII. 1-2; Thucydides, VI. 26.

22. The Hermai were religious statues, commonly positioned by the front entrance of a dwelling. Hermes was the god of travelling and of property. Cf. Thucydides, VI. 27-28.

23. Thucydides, VI. 29; Plutarch, XVIII. 3-XX. 1.

24. Thucydides, VI. 46.

25. Thucydides, VI. 48-50.

26. Thucydides, VI. 48.

27. Thucydides, VI. 50-51.

28. Plutarch, XX. 2-XXI. 6; Diodoros, XIII. 4 i-iv; Thucydides, VI. 60-61.

29. Plutarch, XXII. 1-4.

30. Thucydides, VI. 88-93.

31. Plutarch, XXIII. 1-6.

32. Thucydides, VII. 27-29.

33. Thucydides, VIII. 6, 11-14.

34. Plutarch, XXIII. 7-8; cf. also Plato, Alkibiades I, 121b-c where Plato's mention might provide some support for a claim that the motive was other than lust.

35. Thucydides, VIII. 45-47; Plutarch, XXV 1-2.

36. Plutarch, XXIV. 3-5.

37. Thucydides, VIII. 48-54.

38. Diodoros, XIII. 41. iv-42iii; Plutarch, XXVI. 1-6.

39. Thucydides, VIII. 72-77.

40. Thucydides, VIII. 89-93.

41. Thucydides, VIII. 97. For an excellent and beautiful examination of this in Thucydides, read Leo Strauss, "Preliminary Observations of the Gods in Thucydides' Work." INTERPRETATION, IV:1, Winter 1974, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands.

42. Plutarch, XXVII. 1-4.

43. Xenophon, Hellenika I, i, 11-18; Diodoros, XIII. 49. iii-52ii.

44. Xenophon, Hellenika, I, i, 9-10; Plutarch, XXVII. 4-XXVIII. 2.

45. Xenophon, Hellenika, I, iii, 1-22.

46. Xenophon, Hellenika, I, iv, 8-17; Plutarch, XXXI. 1-XXXII. 3.

47. Xenophon, Hellenika, I, iv, 20-21; Plutarch, XXXII. 4-XXXIII. 3.

48. Plutarch, XXXIV. 2-6.

49. Diodoros, XIII. 68. i-69. iii.

50. Plutarch, XXIX. 1-2.

51. Xenophon, Hellenika I, v, 11-16; Plutarch, XXXV. 2-XXXVI. 2.

52. Plutarch, XXXVI-XXXVIII.

53. Diodoros, XIV. 11. i-iv; Plutarch XXXVIII. 4-XXXIX. 5. There are various accounts, the similar feature being the Spartan instigation. It is not likely that it was a personal assassination (because of the queen), but it was probably not purely due to political motives, either.

54. Aristophanes, Frogs, 1420-1431; cf. Aristophanes, Clouds, 362; Plato, Symposium 221b.

55. Aristophanes, Clouds, 217 ff.

56. Politically speaking, however, this is not to be thoroughly disregarded, for in their numbers they can trample even the best of men.

57. Cf. for example: Plato, Gorgias 500c, Aristotle, Politics 1324a24 ff., Rousseau, Social Contract, Book I, Preface and Bk. II, chap. 7, Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, #11.

58. Hobbes, Leviathan, edited by C. B. MacPherson, Pelican Books, Middlesex, 1968, page 102 ff.

59. It is interesting that Socrates uses the promise of power to entice Alkibiades to listen so that he can persuade him that he doesn't know what power is. It is very important for the understanding of the dialogue that the reader remember that Socrates has characterized Alkibiades' desire for honor (105b) as a desire for power. This is of crucial significance throughout the dialogue, and in particular in connection with Socrates' attempts to teach Alkibiades from whom to desire honor, and in what real power consists. The reader is advised to keep both in mind throughout the dialogue. Perhaps at the end he may be in a position to judge in what the difference consists.

60. The most notorious example, perhaps, is Martin Heidegger, although he was surely not the only important man implicated with fascism.

61. Cf. Aiskhylos, Agamemnon 715-735, and Aristophanes, Frogs 1420-1431, for the metaphor. The latter is a reference to Alkibiades himself, the former a statement of the general problem. (f. also Republic 589b; Laws 707a; Kharmides 155d; and Alkibiades I 123a).

62. The fully developed model resulting from this effort should probably only be made explicit to the educators. The entire picture (including the hero's thoughts about the cosmos, etc.) would be baffling to children and most adults, and would thus detract from their ability to identify with the model. Perhaps a less thoroughly-developed example would suffice for youths. However, the entire conception of the best man that the youths are to emulate should be made explicit. The task is difficult but worth the effort, since the consistency of two or more

features of the model can only be positively ascertained if he is fully developed. An obvious example of where conflicts might arise should this not be done is where, say, a very hybristic, superior and self-confident young man is the leader of the radical democratic faction of a city. Some kind of conflict is inevitable there, and those tensions are much more obvious though not necessarily more penetrating than those caused by incompatible metaphysical views.

63. For example, Lakhes, Kharmides, Republic, Euthyphro.

64. These questions are not the same, for in many dialogues the person named does not have the longest, or even a seemingly major speaking part; e.g., Gorgias, Phaedo, Minos, Hipparkhos.

65. Protagoras, 336d. Here Alkibiades is familiar with Socrates, for he recognizes his "little joke" about his failing memory. However, Socrates was not yet notorious throughout Athens, for the eunuch guarding the door did not recognize him (Protagoras 314d). Much of this speculation as to the date depends on there not being anachronisms between (as opposed to within) Platonic dialogues. We have no priori reason to believe there are no anachronisms. However, it might prove to be useful to compare what is said about the participants in other dialogues. The problem of anachronisms within dialogues is a different one than we are referring to in our discussion of the dramatic date. Plato, for a variety of philosophic purposes, employs anachronisms within dialogues, including perhaps, that of indicating that the teaching is not time-bound.

66. This is obviously related to teleology, a way of accounting for things that concentrates on the fulfilled product, the end or teleos of the thing and not on its origin, as the most essential for understanding the thing. The prescientific, or common-sensical, understanding of things is a teleological one. The superior/ideal/proper characteristic of things somehow inform the ordinary man's understanding of the normal. This prescientific view is important to return to, for it is such an outlook, conjoined with curiosity, that gives rise to philosophic wonder.

67. 103a.1, 104c.4, 104d.4, 104e.1, 123c.8, 123e.3, 124a.2. For this kind of detailed information, I found the Word Index to Plato, by Leonard Brandwood, an invaluable guide.

68. The challenge to self-sufficiency is important to every dialogue, to all men. It is something we all, implicitly or explicitly, strive towards, a key question about all men's goals. Even these days, one thing that will still make a man feel ashamed is to have it suggested that he depends on someone (especially his spouse).

The first step toward self-improvement has to be some degree of self-contempt, and that might be sparked if Alkibiades realizes his dependency.

69. Socrates might be saying this to make the youth open up. It isn't purely complimentary; he doesn't say "you are right." (Cf. also Kharmides 158 a-b). I am indebted for this observation to Proclus whose Commentary on the First Alkibiades, is quite useful and interesting.

70. In order to claim that something is or is not a cause for wonder, one apparently would have to employ some kind of criteria. Such criteria would refer to some larger whole which would render the thing in question either evident or worthy of wonder or trivial. None of these has been explicitly suggested in the dialogue with reference either to difficulty of stopping speech or beginning to talk.

71. It may be important to note that this discussion refers to political limits, political ambitions. Perhaps a higher ambition (perhaps indeed the one Socrates is suggesting to Alkibiades) can be understood as an attempt to tyrannize nature herself, to rule (by knowing the truth about) even the realm of possibility and not to be confined by it.

72. One notices that this, by implication, is a claim by Socrates to know himself, not exactly a modest claim.

73. Interestingly, he does not consider what Alkibiades heard in such speeches to be part of his education, "comprehensively" listed at 106e.

74. This appears similar to Socrates' strategy with Glaukon. Cf. Craig, L.H., An Introduction to Plato's Republic, pp. 138-202; especially pp. 163-4; Bloom, A., "Interpretive Essay," in The Republic of Plato, pp. 343-4.

75. Cf. Republic, 435c.

76. Cf. Republic, 327b, 449b; Kharmides, 153b; Parmenides, 126a.

77. While imagined contexts may influence one's thinking and speaking in certain ways, one is not naively assuming that then one will speak and act the same as one would if the imagined were actualized. Many things might prevent one from doing as well as one imagined. An example familair to the readers of Plato might be the construction of the good city in speech.

78. Cf. 105d, 131e, 123c, and 121a. One might be curious as to the difference between Phainarete's indoor teaching of Socrates and Deinomakhe's indoor teaching of Alkibiades. Also perhaps noteworthy is that Alkibiades was taught indoors by his actual mother: the masculine side of his nurture was not provided by his natural father.

79. Except see Hobbes, Leviathan, chapter 29; Plato, Republic, 372e. And one must remember that when the plague strikes, the city is dramatically affected.

80. Thucydides, VI. 21; I. 142-3; II. 13.

81. Note two things: (1) Athenians don't debate about this at the ekklesia; (2) Alkibiades, as well as the wrestling master, would be qualified (118c-d).

82. Socrates drops dancing here; perhaps it is similar enough to

wrestling to need no separate mention, and to provide no additional material for consideration. But if that were so one might wonder why it was mentioned in the first place.

83. Perhaps "all cases" should be qualified to "all cases which are ruled by an art." The general ambiguity surrounding this remark invites the reader's reflection on the extent to which Socrates' suggestion could be seen to be a much more general kind of advice. Perhaps Alkibiades would be better off imitating Socrates - period. Or perhaps something else about Socrates' pattern (of life) could be said to provide "the correct answer in all cases," - he is after all a very rational man.

84. The referent here is unclear in the dialogue. It could be 'lawfulness' and 'nobility' just as readily as the 'justice' which Socrates chooses to consider; that choice significantly shapes the course of the dialogue. Note: Socrates brought up 'lawful' (even though there probably is no law in Athens commanding advisors to lie to the demos in the event they war on just people); whereas Alkibiades' concern was nobility.

85. This would be especially true if considerations of justice legitimately stop at the city's walls. Cf. also Thucydides, I. 75, and compare the relative importance of these motives in I. 76.

86. This conclusion may not be fair to Alkibiades, for he is clearly not similar to Kallikles (see below) since he is convinced that he must speak with Socrates to get to the truth. He wants to keep talking. But he is still haughty. He has just completed a short displayof skill that wasn't sufficiently appreciated by Socrates, and, most importantly, there will be an unmistakeable point in the dialogue at which Alkibiades does become serious about learning. Alkibiades will confess ignorance and that will mark a most important change in his attitude. His attention here isn't focussed on the premises but on the conclusion of the argument.

87. There are a number of possibilities here for speculation as to the cause of his taking refuge - from shame? from the truth? from the argument?

88. Draughts is a table game with counters, presumably comparable to chess. Draughts is a Socratic metaphor for philosophy or dialectics. The example arises in connection with language, and seem to indicate the reader's participation in the dialogue. First, of course, Plato must have us in mind, for Alkibiades cannot know that draughts are Socrates' metaphor for philosophical dialectics. Second, the metaphor itself demands reflecting upon. How not to play is a strange thing to insert. Though proceeding through negation is often the only way to progress in philosophy, one doesn't set out to learn how not to play. The many indeed cannot teach one to philosophize, but the question of how not to philosophize often has to be answered in light of the many, as does the question of how not to "argue." The philosopher must show caution both because of the many's potential strength over himself, and through his consideration of their irenic co-existence; he must not rock the boat, so to speak.

89. Cf. Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 100; Genesis 2:19-20.

90. It is interesting that with reference to "running" (the province of the gymnastics expert or horseman) Socrates mentions both horses and men. In the example of "health" he mentions only men. Presumably he is indicating that there is some distinction to be made between men and horses that is relevant to the two technae. Quite likely this distinction shall prove to be a significant aid in the analysis of the metaphors of 'physician' and 'gymnast' that so pervade this dialogue. Borrowing the analogy of 'horses' from the Apology (30e), wherein cities are said to be like horses, one might begin by examining in what way a gymnastics expert pertains more to the city than does a doctor, or why "running" and not "disease" is a subject for consideration in the city, while both are important for men. Perhaps a good way to begin would be by understanding how, when man's body becomes the focus for his concerns, the tensions arise between the public and private realm, between city and man.

91. The practical political problem, of course, is not simply solved either when the philosophic determination of 'the many' is made, or when empirical observation yields the results confirming what 'the many' believe. The opinions must still be both evaluated and accounted for.

92. However, when it is an extreme question of health - e.g., starvation, a plague - a question of life or death, they do. The condition of the body does induce people to fight and the condition of the body seems to be the major concern of most people and is thus probably a real, though background, cause of most wars and battles.

93. Homer, Odyssey, XXII 41-54; XVIII 420-421; XX 264-272, 322-337, 394.

94. In Euripides' play, Hippolytos, Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, is in love with her stepson Hippolytos, and though unwilling to admit, she is unable to conceal, her love from her old nurse. She describes him so the nurse has to know, and then says she heard it from herself, not Phaedra.

95. It is undoubtedly some such feature of power as this that Alkibiades expects Socrates to mention as that power which only he can give Alkibiades. It may be that Socrates' power is closely tied to speech - we are not able to make that judgement yet - but Alkibiades is certainly not prepared for what he gets.

The reader is cautioned to remember that Socrates is assuming power to be the vehicle for Alkibiades' honor. At least one sense in which this is necessary to Socrates' designs has come to light. Alkibiades could be convinced that he should look for honor in a narrower group of people once he thought they were the people with the secret to power. It is not as likely that he would come to respect that group (especially not for being the real keys to power) if he hadn't already had his sense of honor reformed.

96. Cf. Gorgias, beginning at 499b and continuing through the end. He certainly doesn't seem to care, although it may be a bluff or a pose.

97. Such as, perhaps, a dagger only partially concealed under his sleeve - Gorgias 469c-d.

98. This, of course, is from the perspective of the city. Very powerful arguments have been made to the contrary. The city may not be the primary concern of the wisest men.

99. Perhaps it should be pointed out, though, that men who devote themselves to public affairs frequently neglect their family - again the tension between public and private is brought to our attention (cf. Meno, 93a-94e).

100. The fact that oaks grow stunted in the desert does not mean that the stunted oak of the desert is natural. The only thing we could argue is natural is that 'natural' science could explain why the acorn was unable to fulfill its potential, just as 'natural' science can explain how there can be two-headed, gelded, or feverish horses. In any explanation of this sort the reference is to a more ideal tree or horse. And any examination of an existing tree or horse will involve a reference to an even more perfect idea of a tree or a horse.

101. It may be of no small significance that Socrates uses the word 'ideas' in this central passage. It is the only time in this dialogue that the word is used and it seems at first innocuous. 'Ideas' is another form of 'eidos' - 'the looks' so famous in the central epistemological books of the Republic. What is so exceptional about the use here is that it occurs precisely where the question of the proper contest, the question of the best man, is raised. Socrates says, "My, my, best of men, what a thing to say! How unworthy of the looks and other advantages of yours." We are perhaps being told it is unworthy of 'the looks,' 'the ideas,' that Alkibiades does not pose a high enough ambition. The translators (who never noted this) are not in complete error. Their error is one of imprecision. The modifier "your" (soi) is an enclitic and would have been understood (by Alkibiades) to refer to "looks" as well as to his other advantages. However, as an enclitic, it is used as a subtle kind of emphasis, and it is clearly the "other advantages" that are emphasized. The 'soi' would normally appear in front of the first of a list of articles. It doesn't here, and the careful reader of the Greek text would certainly be first impressed with it as "the looks." The reference to Alkibiades' looks would be a second thought. And only in someone not familiar with the Republic or with the epistemological problem of the best man, would the "second-thought" be weighty anough to drown the first impression.

Incidentally, it is indeed interesting that the word for the highest metaphysical reality in Plato's works is a word so closely tied to everyday appearance. Once again there is support for the dialectical method of questioning and answering, to slowly and carefully refine the world of common opinion and find truth or the reality behind appearance.

102. Whether the war justly or unjustly is not mentioned.

103. I believe that the referent to "others" is left ambiguous. Note also that here (120c) Socrates speaks of the Spartan generals (strategoi), a subtle change from 'king' (120a) a moment earlier. Perhaps he is implying a difference between power and actual military capability.

104. This is, of course, generally good advice. Cf. Thucydides I 84: one shouldn't act as though the enemy were ill-advised. One must build on one's foresight, not on the enemy's oversight.

105. The important provision of nurture is added to nature. Cf. 103a and the discussion of the opening words of the dialogue.

106. Socrates has included himself in the deliberation explicitly at this point, serving as a reminder to the reader that both of these superior men should be considered in the various discussions, not just one. A comparison of them and what they represent will prove fruitful to the student of the dialogue.

107. Plato, another son of Ariston, is perhaps smiling here; we recall why it is suspected that Alkibiades left Sparta and perhaps why he was killed.

Two more facets of this passage are, firstly, that this might be seen as another challenge by Socrates (in which case we should wonder as to its purpose). Secondly, it implies that Alkibiades' line may have been corrupted, or is at least not as secure as a Spartan or Persian one. Alkibiades cannot be positive that his acknowledged family and kin are truly his.

108. There is a very important exception and one significant to this dialogue as well as to political thinking in general. One may change one's ancestry by mythologizing it (or lying) as Socrates and Alkibiades have both done. This may serve an ulterior purpose; recall, for example, the claims of many monarchies to divine right.

109. Hesiod Theogony 928; cf. also Homer, Iliad 571 ff.

110. The opposite of Athena, Aphrodite (Symposium 180d), and Orpheus (Republic 620a).

111. A number of Athenians may have thought this was much the same effect as Socrates had. He led promising youths into a maze from which it was difficult to escape.

112. This discussion should be compared in detail with the education outlined in the Republic. Such a comparison provides even more material for reflection about the connection between a man's nurture and his nature. (One significant contrast: the Persians lack a musical education).

113. Compare, for example, the difference concerning horseback riding: Plato, Alkibiades I, 121e; and Xenophon, Kyropaideia, I, iii, 3.

114. Cf., for example, Machiavelli, The Prince, chapters 18, 19. The only other fox in the Platonic corpus (besides its being the name of Socrates' deme - Gorgias 495d) is in the Republic (365c) where the fox is the wily and subtle deceiver in the facade of justice which is what Adeimantos, in his elaboration of Glaukon's challenge, suggests is all one needs.

115. The reader of the dialogue has already been reminded of the Allegory of the Cave, also in the context of nurture, at 111b.

116. Thomas Sydenham, Works of Plato Vol. I, p. 69, points out that Herodotos tells us that this is not exclusively a Persian custom. Egyptians, too, used all the revenue from some sections of land for the shoes and other apparel of the queen. Cf. Herodotos, Histories, II, 97.

117. Cf. Pamela Jensen, "Nietzsche and Liberation: The Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future," Interpretation 6:2, p. 104: "[Nietzsche] does not suppose truth to be God, but a woman, who has good reasons to hide herself from man: her seductiveness depends upon her secretiveness..."

118. This greatly compounds the problems of understanding the two men and their eros. What has heretofore been interpreted by Socrates as Alkibiades' ambition for power is now explicitly stated to be an ambition for reputation. Are we to understand them as more than importantly connected, but essentially similar? And what are we to make of Socrates' inclusion of himself at precisely this point? Does he want power too? Reputation? Perhaps we are to see both men (and maybe even all erotic attraction whatsoever) as willing to have power. Socrates sees power as coming through knowledge. Alkibiades sees it as arising from reputation. Is Socrates in this dialogue engaged in teaching Alkibiades to respect wisdom over glory in the interests of some notion of power? The philosopher and the timocrat come out of (or begin as) the same class of men in the Republic. The reader should examine what differences relevant to the gold/philosophic class, if any, are displayed by Socrates and Alkibiades. Perhaps Socrates' education of Alkibiades could be seen as a project in alchemy - transforming silver into gold.

119. Homer, Iliad, X. 224-6. Cf. Protagoras, 348d; Symposium, 174d; Alkibiades II, 140a; as well as Alkibiades I, 119b, 124c.

120. This is not intended to challenge Prof. Bloom's interpretation (The Republic of Plato, p. 311). As far as I am capable of understanding it and the text, his is the correct reading. However, with respect to this point I believe the dialogue substantiates reading the group of men with Polemarkhos as the many with power, and Socrates and Glaukon as the few wise.

121. This is left quite ambiguous. The jest could refer to:
a) Socrates' claim to believe in the gods
b) Socrates' reason as to why his guardian is better
c) Socrates' claim that he is uniquely capable of providing Alkibiades with power.

122. In the Republic, modes and rules of music are considered of paramount political importance. Cf. Republic 376c-403c.

123. Cf. however, Symposium, 174a, 213b. At this stage of the argument Socrates does not distinguish between the body and the self.

124. This is the only time Socrates swears by an Olympian god. He has referred to his own god, the god Alkibiades "talked" to, a general monotheistic god, and he has sworn upon the "common god of friendship" (cf. Gorgias 500b, 519e, Euthyphro 6b), as well as using milder oaths such as 'Babai' (118b, 119c). It would probably be very interesting to find out how Socrates swears throughout the dialogues and reflect on their connection to his talk of piety, and of course, his eventual charge and trial.

125. Strictly speaking that is the remark on which there won't be disagreement, not the one following it. "Man is one of three things," is something no one can disagree with. (He is what he is and any two more things may be added to make a set of three.) Why does Socrates choose to say it this way? And why three? Are there three essential elements in man's nature? As we shall presently see, he does assume a fourth which is not mentioned at this time.

126. Though first on the list of Spartan virtues, temperance (sophrosyne), a virtue so relevant to the problem of Alkibiades, does not receive much treatment in this dialogue. One might also ask: if temperance is knowing oneself, is there a quasi-virtue, a quasi-temperance based on right opinion?

127. This is what Socrates' anonymous companion at the beginning of Protagoras suggests to Socrates with respect to Alkibiades.

128. Homer, Odyssey, II. 364. Odysseus' son, Telemakhos, is called the "only and cherished son" by his nurse when he reveals to her his plan of setting out on a voyage to discover news about his father. His voyage too (permitting the application of the metaphor of descent and human nature) is guarded by a divine being. Alkibiades/Telemakhos is setting out on a voyage to discover his nature.

129. For other references to "stripping" in the dialogues, see Gorgias 523e, 524d; cf. also Republic 601b, 612a, 359d, 361c, 577b, 474a, 452a-d, 457b; Ion 535d; Kharmides 154d, 154e; Theaitetos 162b, 169b; Laws 772a, 833c, 854d, 873b, 925a; Kratylos 403b; Phaidros 243b; Menexenos 236d; Statesman 304a; Sophist 237d.

130. This word for release (apallattetai) has only been used for the release of eros to this point in the dialogue (103a, 104c, 104e, 105d). Parenthetically, regarding this last passage, we note also that the roles of wealth and goodness in well-being have not been thoroughly explored. Perhaps he is suggesting a connection between becoming rich and not becoming temperate.

131. One might interject here that perhaps the virtues resulting from, say, a Spartan nurture, do not depend on the virtues of the

governors. Perhaps they depend on the virtue or right opinion of the lawgiver, but maybe not even that. There might be other counterbalancing factors, as, for example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn suggests about Russians today - (Harvard Commencement Address, 1978, e.g., paragraph 22).

132. As was mentioned with respect to their other occurrences in the dialogue, the metaphors of the diseased city, physician of the city, doctor of the body, pilot of ship, ship-of-state and passenger are all worth investigating more thoroughly, and in relation to each other.

133. There is a dialogue, the Parmenides, in which the "Young Socrates" speaks. We do not know what to make of this, but the fact that he is called the "Young" Socrates somehow distinguishes his role in this, from the other dialogues. He is not called "Young Socrates" in the Alkibiades I, nor is he referred to as "Middle-aged Socrates" in the Republic, nor is he named "Old Socrates" in the Apology.

134. Having come this far, the reader might want to judge for himself some recent Platonic scholarship pertaining to the First Alkibiades. In comparatively recent times the major source of interest in the dialogue has been the popular dispute about its authenticity.

Robert S. Brumbaugh, in Plato for the Modern Age, (p. 192-3) concludes:

> But the argument of the dialogue is clumsy, its dialectic constantly refers us to God for philosophic answers, and its central point of method - tediously made - is simply the difficulty of getting the young respondent to make a generalization. There is almost none of the interplay of concrete situation and abstract argument that marks the indisputably authentic early dialogues of Plato. Further, the First Alkibiades includes an almost textbook summary of the ideas that are central in the authentic dialogues of Plato's "middle" period; so markedly that it was in fact used as an introductory textbook for freshman Platonists by the Neo-Platonic heads of the Academy ... it would be surprising if this thin illustration of the tediousness of induction were ever Plato's own exclusive philosophic theme: he had too many other ideas to explore and offer.

Benjamin Jowett, translator of the dialogue and thus familiar with the writings, says in his introduction to the translation:

> ... we have difficulty in supposing that the same writer, who has given so profound and complex a notion of the characters both of Alkibiades and Socrates in the Symposium should have treated them in so thin and superficial a manner as in the Alkibiades, or that he would have ascribed to the ironical Socrates the rather unmeaning boast that Alkibiades could not attain the objects of his ambition without his help; ... or that he should have imagined that a mighty nature like his could have been reformed by a few not very conclusive words of Socrates... There is none of the undoubted dialogues of Plato in which there is so little dramatic verisimilitude.

Schleiermacher, originator of the charge of spuriousness, analyzed the dialogue, (pp. 328-336). It is to him that we owe the current dispute. Saving the best for last:

> ... there is nothing in it too difficult or too profound and obscure for even the least prepared tyro... This ... work ... appears to us but very insignificant and poor...

and

> ... [genuinely Platonic passages] may be found sparingly dispersed and floating in a mass of worthless matter...

and

> ... we must not imagine for a moment that in these speeches some philosophic secrets or other are intended to be contained. On the contrary, though many genuine Platonic doctrines are very closely connected with what is here said, not even the slightest trace of them is to be met with...

and

> ... in short, however we may consider it, [the Alkibiades] is in this respect either a contradiction of all other Platonic dialogues, or else Plato's own dialogues are so with reference to the rest. And whoever does not feel this, we cannot indeed afford him any advice, but only congratulate him that his notions of Plato can be so cheaply satisfied...

In any event, much could be said about whether anything important to the philosophic enterprise would hinge upon the authorship.

My comments concerning the issue will be few. Firstly there is no evidence that could positively establish the authorship. Even should Plato rise from the dead to hold a press conference, we are familiar enough with his irony to doubt the straightforwardness of such a statement.

Secondly, many of the arguments are based on rather presumptuous beliefs that their proponents have a thorough understanding of the corpus and how it fits together. I will not comment further on such self-satisfaction.

Thirdly, there are a number of arguments based on stylistic analyses. If only for the reason that these implicitly recognize that the dialogue itself must provide the answer, they will be addressed. Two things must be said. First, style changes can be willed, so to suggest anything conclusive about them is to presume to understand the author better than he understood himself. Second, style is only one of the many facets of a dialogue, all of which must be taken into account to make a final judgement. As is surely obvious by now, that takes careful study. And perhaps all that is required of a dialogue is that it prove a fertile ground for such study.

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